

THE RIGHT TO LIVE

By the same Author

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THE GOLDEN HERESY (1914)

Privately printed

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Andrew Dakers



Max Plowman (2nd Lieut. 10th West Yorks) and Tim; June 1917.

[Frontispiece.]

THE RIGHT TO LIVE

ESSAYS

by

MAX PLOWMAN



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INTRODUCTION

THE reader of this wise and beautiful book will discover that the faith which it declares was born of two crucial experiences. One is recorded in the second of the two essays called "The Right to Live", and the utterance which it immediately commanded is the first of those essays. The other experience is not recorded at all, but it is uttered, with splendid eloquence, in the third part of the essay "What does Death Mean to You?" With intimate knowledge and sure judgment the editor has placed them, one at the beginning, the other at the end of the book. Into the rainbow arc that spans their polarity are woven all the pure colours of Max Plowman's imagination, the systole and diastole between them is the steady heart-beat of a book that lives, and will live.

The first of these two crucial and inexhaustible experiences was the discovery of life, the second the discovery of death. "How obvious!" the reader may say. "How simple!" I reply, "but how infinitely rare!" Consider this alone. Max Plowman made his discovery of life at the end of six months on the Western Front in the last war. He had become, as any infantry subaltern in those days was bound to become, familiar with death. The massive, incessant slaughter of the old Western Front is so far unknown in this war, nothing that has happened to the British Army is comparable with what happened to it then. Yet, for all this woeful and haggard familiarity with death, Max Plowman would never have said that he had discovered death. That discovery came later.

On the Somme he discovered life. Quite suddenly he saw it, in all its pristine radiance, the simple and abounding gift of God. And with the absolute confidence of a man

who has received the clear call from God he "walked out of the army", stepped clean out of the mechanical and inhuman shambles into which war had been prostituted. For remember that Max Plowman, though (or because) he was the truest pacifist I have known, held war in honour. It was not, to him, essentially a despicable but rather a human thing. But it had become inhuman. Fair fight had been degraded into mass-murder. An industrial civilisation had made war a blasphemy.

When Max walked out of the Army he "renounced" modern war. He was not converted to a faith that many had held before him. He did not join the fellowship of war-resisters, or become an opponent of conscription. He felt no particular community with those who would have greeted him as a brand plucked from the burning. He felt towards the elect somewhat as he says he did as a boy when he felt a clammy grip upon his hand, and heard the question: Was he saved? He hoped, for his questioner's sake, that he was, for his own, he devoutly hoped not.

And it is of prime importance for the understanding not only of Max Plowman, but of the faith of which he was the spokesman and embodiment, to realise the full meaning of the distinction which he drew between resisting war and renouncing it. The distinction was crucial in his experience. You renounced war, because you recognised it as something in which you yourself were morally involved, something for which you were just as much to blame as anybody else. You renounced it, not by some recondite act of religious faith, but because you saw it simply as a manifest blasphemy against something else, which also you saw simply, the pristine radiance and holiness of life. You renounced it, because you suddenly saw that you were inextricably entangled in a whole great system of blasphemy against life. You were not against war, you were for life.

Your values, man's values, God's values, quite suddenly were revealed as identical

That is why the actual words of the Peace Pledge, "I renounce war, and will never support or sanction another", meant much to Max. They were true to his experience

"There is a wide difference between the will to resist war and the decision to renounce it, for he who renounces an activity judges himself, whereas he who resists an activity passes judgment upon others. If I renounce war, that will very speedily involve me in the necessity of endeavouring to create a new social harmony, whereas if I merely resist war, no such consequence is implied. I may merely resist in the socially-blind belief that general resistance is all that is required to secure peace."

That distinction, as the first "Right to Live" bears witness, was fully present to Max's mind when he left the Army. Nearly twenty years were to elapse before the Peace Pledge Union was founded, and when it was founded not many of its members had attained Max Plowman's level of understanding. To most of them the crucial distinction between war-renunciation and war-resistance was not apparent: they used the phrases as synonyms. And the real growth of the Peace Pledge Union has mainly consisted in the struggle towards a realisation of the difference between them.

We may put it that modern pacifism, which is the renunciation of war, is essentially revolutionary. But again this word revolutionary is ambiguous nowadays. The modern conception of revolution, like the modern practice of warfare, is a mass-affair. We need to think clearly to understand the nature of the revolutionariness of modern pacifism. As Englishmen, we do best to approach it historically. The first war-resisters in this country were the Quakers. But the Quakers had no quarrel with the

mechanism of contemporary society. On the contrary, they were part and parcel of the seventeenth-century social revolution into bourgeois and individualistic society. The creation of bourgeois society was an advance. That is no criticism of the Quakers—they represented the highest life-awareness of their time, and shared in the advance. They became some of the finest exponents of the virtues and the vices of capitalism—great industrialists, great bankers, whose word was as good as their bond.

But their war-resistance was a purely individual affair. They saw and acknowledged no connection between the basic warfare of the competitive civil society of which they were often the distinguished pioneers and the armed warfare in which they refused to participate. The eloquence of a John Bright over the angel of death on the battlefield covered an unawareness of his responsibility for the social shambles of the great manufacturing cities that is astonishing to us to-day. We suspect these eloquent bourgeois pacifists of hypocrisy, yet it is as certain as anything can be that they were not hypocrites. They were merely unaware. For them, trade and peace were synonymous, and sacrosanct. The sanctity of peace haloed the trade for which it gave the opportunity. The idea that the peaceful trade which was their ideal of civilisation was at bottom a ruthless warfare—first, between capital and labour, and then between competing capitalists—could not enter their heads. Trade and peace were one.

The last national spokesman of this fundamental British conviction was Mr Neville Chamberlain. He was the last great bourgeois pacifist, and it was deeply significant that he was the unchallenged head of the National Government in this country. He was, in very deed, the spokesman of the British nation, and though it is popular nowadays to sneer at him as the man of Munich *par excellence*, and to exalt Mr Churchill above him as the war-minded man, that is only

the sycophancy of the times. Mr Chamberlain was every bit as courageous as Mr Churchill, just as John Bright was every bit as courageous as Mr Churchill's predecessor, Lord Palmerston. What is more, Mr Chamberlain was as surely representative of the British nation in the pre-war years as Mr Churchill was in 1940-41. The difference between them was that Mr Chamberlain represented the British nation at peace, Mr Churchill represented the British nation at war. Both were representative Englishmen in this: that they were both entirely ignorant of the fundamental fact that war and peace in a society of bourgeois capitalism are quite indivisible—mere phases in a continuous process of evolution. Chamberlain-Churchill is the Janus-face of peaceful, trading, ignorant Britain. And just as Chamberlain did not understand that peace—real peace—was revolutionary, so Churchill has no understanding that war—real war—is revolutionary too. By that ignorance of his he will finally be judged.

The peace which Chamberlain and Britain sincerely desired called for revolutionary sacrifice—nothing less than the abandonment by the British people of their whole competitive way of life. Max Plowman saw this with crystal clarity on the Somme in 1917.

“Western civilisation has lost its bearings for this one and simple reason: it has substituted the ideal of national wealth for the ideal of national happiness. It has flouted the wisdom of every prophet and every philosopher the world has ever known, by saying in effect, ‘Wealth is the key to all true happiness.’ For the comparatively humane slavery of man by man it has substituted the diabolical slavery of man by a vast inhuman machine which pays him not for his labour as a man, but if, and when, and according to the degree in which he can adapt himself to it.

“We have come to the parting of the ways. Either we decide as a nation to mend our ways and learn humbly and

patiently of life as tractable children, making resultant happiness our touchstone for every step of the journey, or we continue to worship gods long known to be—and now proved—false, and plunge from hell to hell from the hell of acknowledged and passing war to the hell of unacknowledged and interminable war, wherein man is compelled to make of his truest self a foe, a war wherein every man is his own worst enemy ”

“I hear a voice”, Max went on, “saying, ‘What saith this dreamer?’” The dreamer of 1917 was the prophet of 1942 We have lived for twenty-five years the judgment pronounced upon us by Max Plowman in 1917 We are enduring the doom he foretold with literal exactitude And Mr Churchill is our national hero because he makes a virtue of “the blood and sweat and tears” which is the penalty of our ignorance and our lethargy This blood, this sweat, these tears have no virtue in them, they promise no redemption, they are the barren tribute of decaying life to death The process which they are falsely assumed to consecrate will lead us to revolution, sure enough but to a revolution of death a revolution against life a revolution which puts the chains of totalitarianism on the tender individuality of life And men’s disillusion with the machine-prison into which they have been betrayed will be bitter indeed

Modern pacifism is revolutionary, not in this fatal sense, but in the sense that it knows the price of peace and is prepared to pay it and the price is exactly what Max Plowman said it was in 1917—“to mend our ways and learn humbly and patiently of life as tractable children, making resultant happiness our touchstone for every step of the journey” The nation utterly rejected that prophetic wisdom twenty-five years ago, and even now pacifists themselves are only beginning to learn it. That is a very different kind of revolution from the mass-revolution of war. It is a

revolution that will be required and will be valid against all conceivable forms of mass-revolution. It is the revolution of Life against Death: the assertion of Life which, as D. H. Lawrence said, "manifests only in the individual" against the deathly uniformity common to totalitarian peace and totalitarian war.

For that revolution there is no pattern. It is the revolution of peace and into peace. It is the revolution of the individual, but not for the individual. Modern pacifism, of which Max Plowman was one of the foremost prophets, is not against war as such, but is a specific repudiation of the war which is the inevitable condition of a capitalist machine-society. It is, first and foremost, a repudiation of that society *in toto*. Therefore it differs, essentially, from the pacifism which is merely a repudiation of the overt war-condition of that society. It repudiates capitalist "peace" just as categorically as it repudiates capitalist war. It repudiates both together as two indivisible aspects of the same deadly condition.

Perhaps inevitably, this new "faith called Pacifism" is even now scarcely understood. And many of those who profess it have been placed in an intolerable position by tribunals which were formed in consequence of an honest desire to avoid the stupid treatment of conscientious objectors during the war of 1914-18. But Max Plowman himself, as I have said, was not a conscientious objector to the last war. He served in it faithfully as a subaltern, and when the illumination came to him and he walked out he did not call himself a conscientious objector. Was his renunciation of war religious, or was it political? It was both. That conviction of the indissolubility of religion and politics is the distinctive newness of modern pacifism; and that is why it often fares badly before tribunals which seek to draw a hard-and-fast distinction between the religious and the political objector to war, and, worse still,

to pin down the religious objection to objection on Christian grounds. The modern pacifist renounces war not because he is a Christian, even when he is one, but because he is a man who has become aware that modern society is inherently doomed to war. He renounces modern society, not because it is un-Christian (what is a Christian society, anyway?), but because it is inhuman, turned away from life, turned towards death.

But must he not then approve of war for a socialist society? Assuredly not. There is no such thing as a socialist society. The very fact that a socialist society is at war proves that it is not a socialist society. The so-called socialist society of Russia is based upon ruthless internal warfare, and the euphemistic liquidation of "counter-revolutionaries" is the necessary condition of its being. If terrorism is necessary to a socialist society, then we must choose between two things: either we must pronounce a socialist society retrograde and inhuman, or we must deny the name of a socialist society to one which makes use of these inhuman methods. It does not matter which we do. The important thing is to be clear that no modern pacifist can countenance for an instant war for a socialist society. Whether the war be internal or external makes no odds: for internal warfare—the deliberate class-warfare propagated by Communists—leads surely and inevitably to external warfare.

"Religion is politics, and politics is brotherhood", said William Blake. That sums up the faith of modern pacifism. But here again we must be clear what this prophetic statement means, for the desperation of the times has given birth to a school of religious thought which dismisses the apparent identification of religion and politics as the extravagance of idealism, and as a heresy as well. Reinhold Niebuhr who, after Karl Barth, is its chief proponent, has put forward the contrary thesis in the title of his book

Moral Man and Immoral Society The spheres of religion and the spheres of politics are for ever separate

Now if politics be regarded as the art or science of leading and governing masses of men, irrespective of the end to which they are led—the art, in short, of obtaining and retaining political power—we may as well admit quite frankly that religion and politics are not identical, but rather antithetical. The Christian man who desires to be an effective politician must put his Christianity into very cold storage. For the grim fact is that the art or science of leading men in the mass to-day is the art or science of leading them to perdition. All modern leadership, whether it be Democratic, Fascist, or Communist, is based on demagoguery, and demagoguery to-day is only possible by pandering to and exploiting the ignorance of the masses. The basic fact in the modern world is that the masses have no understanding of the laws which govern their own social situation, and what is true of the masses is almost equally true of the politicians who lead them.

This is an entirely new situation. It is the direct consequence of the sudden development of an industrial mass-society, which has simultaneously brought into being mass-educated mass-democracy and a social and economic situation completely beyond its understanding. Political power has passed into the hands of the masses at the very moment, and by the very same process, that the situation on which their political power is exercised has complicated itself beyond their comprehension. And this is true whether we consider the dictator countries or the democracies. They are equally to be reckoned as mass-democracies. The only important difference between a democracy and a dictator country to-day is that the democracy eschews internal terrorism, and therefore still contains the possibility of changing its government without violence. The difference is important. But in a time of unpre-

cedentedly rapid and revolutionary change like the present it may be less important than it seems for the war-leader leads his country during a period in which his actions rigidly determine the future development of society Ignorant himself, placed in control by his appeal to the ignorance and panic of the mass in crisis, he leads his people only in a Gadarene rush down a steep place into the sea

This is the essential nature of modern politics To pretend that religion has any connection with or control over this process would be foolish indeed It is, by inherent necessity, the politics of perdition But if politics be what it is often supposed to be, the art of governing a country well, so that its citizens are encouraged towards the good life, then we must say that modern politics is either not politics at all, or bad politics If it is good politics we want, then the first step on the long long road towards getting good politics is clearly to understand that mass-politics is diabolical The minimum necessary condition of good politics on a large scale is peace, and peace is impossible in or between competitive societies Out of this impasse, which cannot continue for long because of the colossal destruction which it causes—destruction of productive capacity in peace, diabolical perversion of productive capacity and destruction of life in war—there are two conceivable escapes Both entail the abolition of mass-politics one, by the creation of an authoritarian pax over large territories, the other by the resumption of politics into the hands of small groups of people who are prepared “to learn humbly and patiently of life”. These do not necessarily exclude one another. In the historical event it is likely that they will prove to be complementary antitheses And this is the answer to those, half-convinced and half-hearted, who insist on the obvious fact that the group dedicating itself to learning living from life, “making

resultant happiness our touchstone for every step of the journey", will never make a mass-appeal. It will not. In the nature of things it cannot. It can be no more than a movement in its tender infancy, blades of grass seeking their way amid the joints and cracks of the totalitarian masonry of the Cæsarism which is the inescapable destiny of mass-society. But it is a movement sustained by the sure knowledge that it re-embodies all the religious truth of the original dynamic of democracy—the sense that the individual person is immediately responsible to all that the highest life-awareness of the time conceives as God.

This is, in the last resort, an individual affair. We have to discover God anew for and in ourselves. Just as the original impulse to British democracy was given by a rediscovery of God, now that that impulse is spent in the barren desert of a mass-society, wherein the individual can recognise and feel no responsibility at all, but is conscious of himself only as the passive victim of powers entirely beyond his knowledge and control, God must be discovered again, by individual men and women. That is the beginning and the end of Max Plowman's message to his generation. Discover God and obey Him, if you discover Him, you cannot but obey Him, for "the test of religion is whether it is a man's own." No second-hand religion, therefore, but a religion which is action, and cannot be other than action. As he put it in 1917:

The time is coming when man will possess sufficient moral virtue to say to some soul-destroying device of mechanism "You offer me bread without the sweat of my brow, but I refuse your offer knowing not only that your bread contains poison, but that this body of mine must sweat or die."

Was he in this just a romantic in revolt against the machine? Nothing could be further from the truth. "The great gains of an age of materialism must be consolidated by a new sense of values", he said. That was

the crux. A new sense of values could come only from a rediscovery of God. Indeed, the discovery of a new sense of values and the rediscovery of God have precisely the same meaning. And the test of whether we have discovered true values, and the true God, is the simple test which was absolutely central to Max Plowman's faith—the resultant happiness that follows every step on the road of obedience to God and reverence for the new values which are God's voice in our souls. Max put the same fundamental truth from a slightly different angle when he wrote "A religious attitude is one in which the individual himself accepts the burden of the incarnation of new value." The individual, acting in accord with the new values he has apprehended, ordering his life humbly and patiently in obedience to them, is the religious man. He is also the pioneer of creative politics, the politics which accepts the necessity of separation from the mass-society doomed to self-destruction. Max Plowman was a prophet of the politics of creativeness—the politics of life consciously and delicately opposed to the politics of death. And there was, he knew, no basis for creative politics but religion, no authority to follow in pursuing them but God.

To some Max Plowman appeared the arch-individualist. This arch-individualist shortened his life by his excessive labours for others. He spent himself unsparingly on the re-edification of "The Adelphi Centre" at Langham that it might be a place where, in the full stress of war, men and women might come to learn the positive implications of their pacifist faith, labouring in common to create a cell of the new society of brotherhood, a university of the politics of brotherhood and religion. He was not an individualist, but one who lavished himself in the effort to enable others to become individual persons. There is an abyss between these two things. To become an individual was, in Max's belief, a religious experience, indeed, it was *the* religious

experience. Becoming an individual and entering into possession of a religion were the same thing for, as he says in that inexhaustible essay, "The Test of Religion", religion is the resolution of experience, and a man enters into religion therefore at the moment when he discovers that his experience has meaning. "A satisfying religion", he finely says, "is to be recognised by the sense of gratitude for the experience of life which it begets. No religion is worthy of a man unless it gives him a deep abiding sense that all is well, quite irrespective of what happens to him personally."

That was, for Max, the only possible beginning of a new way of life. "The essential revolution must happen in ourselves." Only through the religious regeneration of the individual man would men have the conviction and the courage to take the creative stand against the deathly mechanism of modern society. A world in which every man and every nation is devoted to the pursuit of personal security has necessarily become a nightmare of insecurity. and still the frenzied pursuit of security goes on.

We are fighting, we are told, for security—political security, security against war. We fought for that in the last war. "Never again!" we were told. So now that it *has* come again we are told that it is for another kind of security—economic security, for all. Do we mean it, or do we not? Economic security for all means economic security for the Germans and the Japanese—for others besides them, of course. But they are the test. Do we really mean that after this war we are determined to see that the Germans are economically secure? "Of course", say the Christian warriors, "but we must see that Germany is punished first." Do not, for God's sake, let us humbug ourselves. It was this same determination to punish Germany which, in the form of a demand for fantastic "reparations", flung Germany into the abyss not merely

of economic insecurity, but of downright economic despair. From that abyss emerged the demon of Nazism. If now we mean economic security for all, let us say it in the only form in which it is not a barren and hypocritical subterfuge: that we are determined that after this war the German people shall share equally with ourselves, that we really and truly intend, before God, to look upon them and treat them as fellow-citizens of one commonwealth, fellow-members of one society. If we said that, they and we might wonder why the war was being fought at all. If we cannot say that, let us not tempt the judgment of God once more by making the lying profession that we are fighting for economic security for all. We have sinned that sin before. Now we are paying the penalty. We said in the last war that we were fighting for security for all, we did not mean it. The event proved that we were fighting for political security for ourselves alone. When Germany was defeated and impotent, we had neither generosity nor friendship for her, when she began to be powerful, we sought to appease her. Twenty of the most bitter and barren years in European history were spent in our seeking security against defeated Germany, and we are where we are to-day.

Nations like individuals have to find meaning in their experience. The sin of Britain is that it refuses to seek meaning in the experience of twenty bitter years. That experience is the experience of individuals no less than the experience of the nation itself. And the individual who finds meaning in the experience knows that the pursuit of security ends in death. Therefore the individual who, by discovering meaning in his experience, discovers God, separates himself from the nation that refuses experience and therefore refuses God. By that very act he chooses insecurity. He lives precariously on the margin of a society self-dedicated to total war. It cannot be otherwise;

nor would he have it otherwise. The pacifist who is not prepared for the conscious plunge into insecurity, in the faith that it is the only way to true security, is unworthy of his creed.

But for him who accepts the call the adventure of life begins. He is committed to the effort to discover a new and true way of life—a life lived in actual obedience to the God whom he discovers. To that quest Max Plowman committed himself when he underwent the essential revolution on the Somme, and at that same time he clearly formulated its terms: “the maintenance of that harmony between you and the earth, between you and your fellow-man, which is the basis of all civilisation.” The quest for a way of life in which that twofold harmony is maintained, with the resultant happiness the test of every real step forward on the journey of discovery—such was the path marked out for pacifists by Max Plowman in 1917. It is (I believe) just in so far as they are following it that they are significant in society to-day.

“There is only one war worth fighting”, he said. “It is the war for truth.” And truth, for ever to be distinguished from mere fact, he said again, is a matter of right relation. Right relation to the earth, right relation to one’s fellow-men, right relation to one’s own experience. Having achieved those truths, a man was obedient to God and to his highest self. Not that he became infallible. On the contrary, in the effort to maintain each one of those right relations he was bound to fail again and again. But he had the clue, he had been given the note, he knew his own absolute values, to which he must return. “The only name we can give to an absolute standard of values is God.”

Here we come to the other pole of the polarity of Max’s experience and his wisdom—the discovery of death.

Were I to attempt to explore all that this discovery meant for Max this essay would have no end. I will therefore be

brief The condition of the discovery of death, for Max, was love We discover the meaning of death when death takes from us the bodily presence of one whom we have loved to the uttermost of our capacity for love That is the key to the profound and entirely convincing interpretation of Hamlet which is the critical jewel of this book. Death must be experienced as the negation of human love, by a heart capable of human love, for the mystery and magnificence of death to be revealed

The one who contained the whole meaning and expression of life, died And we died too—died in an agony of despair—died fighting all the way, from support to support, pleading with fate for pity and with life for a single concession Till there was nothing to defend not a recess that pain had not ravaged, not a cranny of possession that death had not ransacked

And still there is nothing

And yet there is everything For out of the whirlwind came a still small voice, and it said "For the possession of one thing you would gladly have lost the world You have lost the treasure of your heart Behold, I give you another world, and in it your treasure You held it in fear, and your love was bound See, I have taken away the fear and freed the love"

To take away the fear and free the love. That was the power of God, as discovered by Max in death It was the nature of God that He did this And when this happens in ourselves we know God Call him by what name you will, this is the sign-manual of His activity.

And this is why and how pacifism for Max could not but be religious It was essentially the liberation of love from fear Nothing but that. But anything less was barren To be a pacifist because one is afraid of war—this was mere cowardice and unworthiness. To renounce war because in a moment of vision one saw, once and for all, that modern war is the very product and embodiment of fear—

fear now grown so prodigious that it eats away the love that is the root of all life—this was the courage of life

I know this to be true I believe it to be the only truth worth knowing I believe that those who do know it have no choice but to obey it. In that obedience there is great joy The love that is at the root and in the flower of life moves freely in ourselves The very bitterness of the doom of a society from which fear has cast out love enhances the sense of our gratitude for the experience of life, our “deep abiding sense that all is well, quite irrespective of what happens to us personally”

To this joy of the faith called pacifism this lovely book is the finest witness that I know It is radiant with the life-wisdom—*le gay savoir*—of a rare, brave, beautiful, and intensely human man an incomparable friend, in whom was incarnate that great wave of generosity which alone can contend with and prevail against the new great wave of death

JOHN MIDDLETON MURRY

EDITOR'S NOTE

THE first essay in this book, and the one that gives its name to the collection, was written in the summer of 1917, when Max Plowman was still in the army that was fighting the war to end war. Actually he was on "light duty" with his regiment (the 10th West Yorks) at Whitley Bay, living in billets with me and the baby, Tim, then just over a year old. Every few weeks he had to go before a Medical Board to see if he was "fit for duty"—*i.e.* sufficiently recovered from the concussion and shell-shock that had sent him home from the Somme in January, to allow him to be sent back again.

Whenever I hear those words—"The right to live"—I see a small seaside parlour, with Max, pencil in hand and note-book in front of him, sitting at the table. He is in subaltern's uniform but without a Sam Browne as he is indoors, a brother officer is lounging in the arm-chair beside him. Tim, in a hired play-pen, is offering his toys one by one to this young man, whose interest is divided between the flattering attentions of the son and his desire to listen to what the father is saying, and sometimes reading from the closely written pages.

As this little scene comes before me I have the sense of four people on a raft. Why a raft I do not know, but so it is. There is a tempest raging somewhere, and they have all been through it, but for the moment they are peacefully afloat on calm seas. Prospero, captain, is telling of tides and reefs and treacherous currents behind and ahead of them, the "little cabin-boy" is banging merrily away in his corner, and the crew lean on their oars to listen, spell-bound.

The contents of that note-book were published in 1918

as a pamphlet It cost a penny, or 7s 6d per 100, as the sea-blue cover persuasively pointed out, and could be obtained of Messrs King & Jarrett Ltd, Holland Street, Blackfriars, and of Messrs F & E. Stoneham, at 79 Cheapside, and branches

The name and memory of W F Baker, book-lover, student, and at this time manager of a bookshop in the City, are for ever linked with the issuing of this pamphlet—as they are with the beginnings of all Max's literary life Baker stood sponsor for the pamphlet from the moment it was first shown him, he made arrangements for its publication, and, having launched it, watched over and encouraged its progress with selfless energy and devotion. Years before, Max had thought of going into the book business himself, and had served a six months' apprenticeship in a retail bookshop, though what he afterwards described as "the rotten state" of the whole book trade at that time kept him from going further into it But he knew its history and inner workings well enough to be able to speak with authority, and for "Bookshop Baker" (as we privately called him, to distinguish him from another) he had an admiration as well as an affection that were unusual even for Max, who never knew how to stint of either Ardent, shy, sensitive, his hands always full but always ready to help with other people's burdens, in later years Baker found the worries and responsibilities of his job too much for strength over-taxed too long Hearing of his tragic death one could only feel, with sorrowful indignation, that yet one more—and one who stood for all the sweetness and integrity of English literature—had been sacrificed to the blind monster of commercialism.

The publication of this pamphlet was nevertheless one of Baker's happiest ventures I shall always remember the pride with which he told us, calling one day to inquire after its progress, that it had certainly "hit the bull's eye".

And in the sense that it offers a convincing diagnosis of the social sickness of the day I think Baker's opinion was itself fairly well on the mark. For in spite of a somewhat involved and truculent opening (which might perhaps have held up the casual reader of twenty years ago, but which the "compulsorily educated" of to-day—to borrow a good Shavianism—will take in their stride), and allowing for a youthful delight in rhetoric which Max always held to be a dignified and legitimate form of art, used with discretion, *The Right to Live* states the case for what may broadly be called Socialism with fine simplicity, and develops its fundamental thought with steady and deepening spiritual intensity. It was written not only "to a man rising from the trenches" but *by* one, and he, not merely an onlooker at that tyranny of Western commercialism which had reduced life to this ruinous travesty, but one of its victims. The writer had himself "served tables" for ten years in the family brick business before turning to, and finally from, the book trade in alternate hope and disgust. The right pleaded for and the truth presented with such passion and tenderness by one young man in khaki on behalf of all his brothers, had already been tried out in his own being.

This, then, and the fact that within the last few years Max would write and speak of this twenty-two-year-old document as "worth more than all" he had "written either before or since", is my reason for giving it here as nearly as possible as it left his hand, for placing it first, and taking its title for this book of essays. If I do not go all the way with him in his judgment of it, that is because among so many aspects of truth expressed (it appears to me) supremely well, I find it impossible to single out any one as paramount. But it is true to say that the essay which W. F. Baker hailed as a "winner" (perhaps too hopefully) in 1917, contains the basis of Max's whole philosophy. It is the

seed-bed of those beliefs and that action which his maturity bore as its ripest fruit

Writing in *The Adelphi* in 1939 Max used the title of his early essay in historical prophecy to restate in full consciousness the truth he had discovered but "could only state half-consciously in 1917" The pamphlet had then been long out of print, but with a Refugee "Problem" now confronting—and confounding—the world that for twenty years had docketed (and dismissed) Unemployment with exactly the same label, Max knew that the wheel had come full circle that life had judged the civilisation which denied "to its members the right to work—which is the human equivalent of the right to live". judged it, and found it wanting

To-day the shop in London which saw the beginnings of Max's literary activities stands up intact between two eyeless, gutted shells of buildings—not a stone damaged, not a book displaced And I like to think that some guardian angel, some emanation of pure love, has spread its wings there, to preserve the place where "Bookshop Baker" once gave Max Plowman (in William Blake's words) "the end of a golden string"

The words apply in a double sense, for all who read this book through will realise that Blake was something more than the prevailing "literary influence" of Max's life His book, *An Introduction to the Study of Blake* (published by Messrs Dent in 1927), tells to those who are interested what that "more" was, as does an introduction he wrote to the Everyman edition of *The Poems and Prophecies of William Blake* The "Note on William Blake's *Marriage of Heaven and Hell*" included here is the essay he contributed to the facsimile copy of this work, which he edited for the same firm in the same year

Most of the other essays and articles in this collection were published at different times in *The Adelphi*. These

have been starred in the list of contents, and copies of many of the numbers in which they appeared are still obtainable from the Adelphi office. "The Problem of War and Peace", which is given here in two parts, was originally a lecture delivered at one of the early Adelphi Summer Schools, in 1934 or '35. "Some Values in *Hamlet*" has the opposite history. It was written as an essay—the outcome of many years' brooding meditation on the subject of death, and read in 1936, at Dr G B Harrison's invitation, to the Shakespeare Association at King's College, London. "Notes on *Macbeth*" followed as a natural sequence, and there were hopes at that time that a long-discussed *Study of Shakespeare's Plays* was at last taking shape. But when that same winter Dick Sheppard, after reading *The Faith called Pacifism*, asked Max to take on the Secretaryship of the Peace Pledge Union, the *Macbeth* notes were abandoned. (Though published later in *The Adelphi* they were even then left unfinished.) "Money and 'The Merchant'" harks back to the comparatively calmer days of 1931, and to a presentation of Shakespeare's romantic comedy by Mr Harcourt Williams at the Old Vic, which delighted Max by its finely perceptive quality; though I think it is not fanciful also to read some of his comment on the financial crisis of that summer in this same essay. "The Melancholy of Jaques" (printed in *The Oxford Magazine* in December 1927) is another relic of this unwritten book.

If *Hamlet* was king in Max's hierarchy of Shakespeare's plays, *As You Like It* was also crowned and throned. Or, to put it more truly, these two plays were for him always equal and opposite—opposite in content and equal in value, the necessary complement of one another. Two of those "Contraries", as Blake would say, without which "is no progression". To write about *As You Like It* was as near to an ambition as Max ever came. But in 1927 he was a

sick man, with a duodenal ulcer perpetually flaring up And in the following spring the death of the child whose life had been his lodestar, and had (I believe) prompted the question with which this book opens, set all he had pieviously done apart for ever The Hamlet essay was in some measure the unpacking of this treasure of experience in later years

But with the war-clouds gathering over Europe in the later 'thirties, and every living value threatened, Max felt there was only one thing worth doing in the time that still remained namely, *to waken men to consciousness.*

*"England! awake! awake! awake!
Jerusalem thy Sister calls!"*

"I have Ignorance to Instruct and Innocence to Defend"

These words of Blake might be taken as the text of practically all Max wrote in the last few years of his life, though he would have been the last person to take them consciously to himself

For his best work was always done impromptu, in a manner of speaking The very idea of "sitting down to write" was hateful to him The book by which many of his later friends know him best (*The Faith called Pacifism*) came into being only because two determined people insisted on collecting some of his current talks and writings about peace and sending them to a publisher The best, most quintessential Max is to be found in his letters, and in his poems—in the most spontaneous, as in the thrice-winnowed expression of his pure and vital spirit It is in this category that I place the last four essays of this book

"An Appreciation of John Donne's Poems" (printed in *Everyman*, in 1929) was his first purely "literary" work after the last war, and reflects the temper and capacity of a mind always most at home among the great princes of art, or the saints of God—who are in truth the same.

"Sleeping and Waking", "What does Death Mean to

You?" and "Ripeness is All" (three essays which were published in *The Aryan Path* and appear here by kind permission of the editor) are of the nature of poetry, and have for that reason been chosen to complete a collection of essays which range in the manner of wandering stars between the poles of life and death

Max Plowman died at Langham, Essex, on June 3rd 1941, at the age of fifty-seven.

D. L. P.

LANGHAM,

November 1941.

THE RIGHT TO LIVE (1917)

If a child is born has it a right to live?

Those wary souls who pervert the purpose of history to evade the promptings of conscience those moral equilibrists to whom life is a perpetual enactment of poor law those elderly and emaciated spirits who, with pontifical indulgence, grant to every green bud that hope puts forth the blight of "generous emotion", will raise each spiky quill of porcupine mistrust at the sound of such a question. They will call to mind the "generous emotions" of a hundred years ago, and remembering such axioms as Rousseau's "Man is born free, but everywhere we see him in chains", will provide cover for themselves in the thought that consciences toughened by a generation of scientific thinking have grown strong enough to strangle any of the quibbling little forms of life moral philosophy may still attempt to put forth for the benefit of man.

In the days that have gone by for ever, intellectual sophistry was practised with so ingenious a craft that the painted skeleton passed for honest wisdom a thousand times among those to whom education and enfranchisement were unwieldy novelties. True, irritation at being thus deceived was gathering force, but, distracted by the shouts of many guides, men lacked a touchstone for their honesty, and their power was often enough diverted by knavery into channels so skilfully dug that streams of energy rising from the same spring were soon to be discovered flowing in opposite directions. Men asked for bread and were given ferro-concrete.

But the war¹ came, and though the high priests of sophistry still burn incense before the same altars, they may

¹ 1914-1918

be seen more frequently than of wont in the outer courts listening to the tale rumour brings from the wilderness, and it may be noted as significant that after such conferences the smile of self-sufficiency fades for a moment

The war came The war of liberty So called by some in high places upon whose lips the deathless word sounded strangely, for they seemed to speak it for the first time, and then merely because, perhaps better than another, it would serve a turn Gentlemen they were who had a distinctly unfortunate habit of appearing

“Hardy and industrious to support
Tyrannic power”

The war came, and with it the right to die And the commercial traveller who had begged his bread from door to door, and the clerk who had worn thin gentility as a cloak for hunger, and the factory hand who had grown to likeness of the wheel he served, and all that countless multitude for whom the means of life was an unassured condition of servility, were invited to the banquet of the State They were clothed, they were fed, they were housed, they were honoured, and many a one who had spent all his days in fear of penurious life now reclined at ease upon the opulent couch of death Behold! they were citizens of no mean city

From suburbs and from hovels, from the tenements of industrial prisons, from the pigsties of the countryside, of their own accord they came in thousands Some saw adventure like an old Pied Piper whistling through the street a tune which suggested the outrageous romances of boyhood, and promised at least temporary relief from monotony Some stepped out to prove the merits of individuality which had hitherto been denied a single gesture, but now began to feel the tokens of courage on its breast Some attested the promptings of duty which owed more than half its appeal to the power of old tradition.

Some came from fear of cowardice, a few at the bidding of the Church, one, here and there, at the command of starvation

And for liberty they have suffered the torments of the damned They have been shot and stabbed to death They have been blown to pieces They have been driven mad They have been burned with liquid fire They have been poisoned with phosgene They have been mutilated beyond description They have slowly drowned in mud They have endured modern war

To what end? For what liberty?

Joy and pain are the touchstones of honesty They form the two-edged scalpel the surgeon uses to divide the tissues of falsehood They are the great simplifiers, the heaven and hell which all insidious tyrannies try to avoid by holding their victims suspended in an emotional void For the basest tyranny is not one which crushes the life out of its victim, it is rather one which assesses his strength with exactness and compels him to a burden heavy enough to crush his spirit while his body remains motive Should the body threaten to expire tyranny is genuinely concerned, for reasons obvious to all but itself

Suddenly, and almost against its will, the tyranny of Western commercialism overstepped the mark Suddenly men awoke to the nemesis of unrestricted international competition, and tyranny allowed its headlong greed to push its victims into the manifest violence of actual war Had its cunning been more skilful, had its power of combination been more fully developed, the financial potentates among the nations would not have imagined they could gain more by robbery than by craft The financiers of the greatest nations would not have risked all in a contest with one another, nor is it probable that they foresaw such an event In any case it is a lesson they have doubtless learned ere this, and one which, in the most

literal sense, they will hope to profit by in the future. For had they even consulted those who in this sphere are our most powerful rulers they would have assuredly avoided calamity. And indeed, if we do honestly desire the "peace" of a restored commercialism let us at once display the wisdom of handing its safeguard over to those who are by nature its kings and priests, giving to the Jew that acknowledgment which has long been his desert.

But before we vote with any solidarity for peace and fiercer competition, let us take a glance at the man who, after all, will be the final arbiter—yes, even though we hoodwink him seventy times seven.

Standing in trenches for days and sometimes weeks together, upon duty which, however arduous, does not demand such mental application as he was accustomed to in civil life on long marches in the enforced idleness of hours spent in dug-outs back in billets even "on the square" once the perfection of automatic precision was attained, he has been thinking. Not, let us hope, with the fervour of Rodin's "Penseur", but rather as one who thinks through his body and after long hours of weariness is surprised to find at how many conclusions he has arrived.

Especially do I see him thinking at dawn and sundown when all along the narrow strip of earth accurst, year in, year out, in winter and in summer the countless host performs the solemn rite of standing to arms. At such times something in the chill wind and wakening light, something in the gathering gloom and awe of silence will prompt the dullest to meditation. Even the whistle and thud of shelling which usually announce the hour of these festivals will often only serve to rally thought and press home the loose charge of resolution. Then, forecasting uncertain trouble to come and certain danger to be, he thinks with a clearness he had never known before. The attentive inactivity compels him to think even against his will.

His thought is primitive perhaps, but it is simple and elemental and therefore has quality. It is very clear. Subconsciously he knows that his reflections may cease for ever within the next minute, and those who have any imagination will not ascribe to him elaborate dialectics. When death looks a man full in the eyes he will not commonly think of life at so many shillings a week however strong the man's habit of mind may have been. Neither will he, at such a time, be cudgelling his brains to balance the promises of amelioration made by rival politicians. Nor will his mind, already craving for rest and security from violence, gloat over the prospects of revolution. Ask him what he wants and he will give you the simplest and most pathetic of answers: "I only want to live"—adding possibly, "and by God! I mean to if I ever get out of this", merely because he sees the figure of death challenging his chance of ever again having the opportunity.

That is all. Could any thinking be more natural, more simple? Surely this cannot be the predatory hand of labour so feared that panic divides the upholders of authority into those who would put the helm of State into this unpractised hand, and those who would grasp the hand with a mailed fist.

"Only to live"! Is that all?

Come, sophistry! Pull down the lapels of your coat. Smile and smile again. The fool is to be satisfied with a word, you need not trouble about ferro-concrete.

Cheer up! faint-hearted captains of wheels, knights and baronets of the "essential" industries which turn out complex machines by the simple process of putting men into slots, your man-in-the-slot machine shall never stop. These stiff-necked males are learning the value of life-at-any-price, and there is wind-up among them as they see how quickly you can convert your machines to take the lighter coinage of woman.

Stand at ease! fox-eyed floaters and swamperers of industries, company combiners, skilled liquidators, gentlemen of vast capital and very limited liability, ancestral landlords and monarchs of the eternal ground rent

Stand easy! you time-honoured money-changers, you household benefactors, who to earn an honest crust have put the arms of octopus around the small shopkeeper All is well! The world's great age begins anew Peace on earth, good-wills to the plutocracy Let us now praise the British Constitution

Yet stay a moment! The demand is a little indefinite. He wishes "to live" The fellow's lack of education probably explains his want of scientific exactness in the use of words, but let us clearly understand him Does he demand twenty-five or thirty shillings a week? Or does he mean that either or less will now suffice? Does he desire to return to our friend the *status quo ante*? Does he honestly mean that he merely desires to exist and will be content with his former prospects of continuance in the flesh for about threescore years? Or does original sin now prompt in him some dream of licence and luxury at the expense of his betters?

"To live"? That does not mean the same thing to any two people Ask Eton and Houndsditch weigh the answers and the words mean nothing Yet it is obvious they are not meaningless in the mouth of this man Death's close proximity has given the words their power Had this proximity been but for a moment, the matter of a few weeks, the longing for a human existence would not have framed itself into a fierce demand In fact any demand prompted by some stress of circumstance which had been anticipated, and was confined to the nation's gladiators, would have been easily dispelled by the winds of sophistry in the first few months of ensuing peace. But this man has lived in closer proximity to death than any man in previous

history, and for a longer period. Moreover, he is not a comparatively small portion of the nation, but may be numbered in millions. In ultimate potentiality he *is* the nation.

Had he made the war and owned his proud responsibility, he would return to pre-war conditions with fairly good grace, but not the most barefaced sophist in Westminster will rise to affirm that before the war the average elector had any direct responsibility for British foreign diplomacy. The average man's fingers were kept much too busy in the attempt to make the ends of his thread of subsistence meet. He had neither the time nor opportunity to unravel the spidery webs of foreign affairs. Enough for him to keep his hammock in repair well below decks, there was short shrift for any who tried to mount the bridge, and grievous words for him who asked the names of Imperialism's ports and happy havens.

Even now, although the war has presented him with this extraordinary lease of time for thought, he is barely concerned to ask them. His deafness alike to the threats and flatteries of foreign princes has been the despair of more elaborate minds. Give him his life, and his plot to cultivate, and he is deaf to the tales of thunder in the East and insurrection in the West. Obsessed by some domestic desire to mind his own business he cannot even see a sneaking villain across the Irish Sea, and will not gladly storm the house and shoot both man and wife if these, his very neighbours, have high words. He is for ever trying to dodge the White Man's Burden, and is too bored by an occasional glance at it to pick it to pieces and examine the contents.

And this is the man who "wants to live"!

And he may do so. Yes, if he have the fortitude to remember the essential qualities of that life he saw from the trenches, and the courage to resist every attempt made to put him off with some base counterfeit.

Again and again we are thrown back on the average man's resolve to live a sane and harmonious life, and though we sidetrack each attempt with considerations of duty and honour, religion and philanthropy, necessity and experience and every conceivable means of evasion, we do so only to our hurt, and, if we persist, to the destruction of our civilisation. Life will not long endure a civilisation that does not encourage widely distributed happiness. Sooner or later it destroys those anæmic communities in whose blood the bright corpuscles of happiness are ceasing to flow. Every State which does not consistently follow the law of general happiness is doomed. Nature itself does not exist without a preponderance of joy.

The time has come when those who are responsible for the government of this country must realise that the laws which they administer and the justice they uphold are no longer contributory to general happiness. They are in antagonism to the deepest laws of Nature. They are in fierce opposition to the precepts of Christ and out of harmony with the rudimentary principles of humanity.

Western civilisation has lost its bearings for this one and simple reason. It has substituted the ideal of national wealth for the ideal of national happiness. It has flouted the wisdom of every prophet and every philosopher the world has ever known, by saying in effect, "Wealth is the key to all true happiness." For the comparatively humane slavery of man by man it has substituted the diabolical slavery of man by a vast inhuman machine which pays him not for his labour as a man, but if, and when, and according to the degree in which he can adapt himself to it.

We have come to the parting of the ways. Either we decide as a nation to mend our ways and learn humbly and patiently of life as tractable children, making resultant happiness our touchstone for every step of the journey,

or we continue to worship gods long known to be—and now proved—false, and plunge from hell to hell from the hell of acknowledged and passing war to the deeper hell of unacknowledged and interminable war, wherein man is compelled to make of his truest self a foe, a war wherein every man is his own worst enemy

I hear a voice saying, "What saith this dreamer?" I hear the questions of a thousand minds choked with the obsessions of misused life I see the curled lips of those who fancy that another madman has come with the effrontery of another panacea which will build New Jerusalem out of a tired man's wish To such I do not write Nor need they waste their scorn, nor further abuse their minds by proving that human happiness is an impossibility in this world He that is faithless, let him be faithless still He who believes that the reality of happiness is reserved in heaven for ever to those who preach rewards for death, let him continue in the belief I write for a man rising from the trenches

"a man that knows
What life and death is there's not any law
Exceeds his knowledge neither is it lawful
That he should stoop to any other law"

Happiness is the gift of harmony There is between man and the earth which bears him a perfect equation a spiritual law of gravity Upon his recognition and acceptance of that equation depends all the happiness he can ever know The Greeks signified their knowledge of this equation by the principle *μηδὲν ἄγαν* *nothing too much* This globe on which we find ourselves, this palace of wonder and delight, itself moves in obedience to laws of harmony we can know and appreciate Man again moves in obedience to laws of harmony with the earth. The beauty of earth's harmony as it revolves in concord with the spheres is beyond our power to increase or destroy, but

through the wonder of self-consciousness man has acquired the power either to enhance or detract from the beauty of his harmony with the earth. As yet he is but little aware of that harmony and even his highest conceptions of it are but shadows of reality. He has not yet even learnt to express adequately the intense happiness which his hearing of that harmony, imperfect though it be, always gives to him. But while the degrees of harmony between man and the earth remain almost infinite to our perceptions, there are limits to earth's endurance of discord. Western Europe to-day seems bent on finding them, and what does our partial knowledge of them teach? That active disregard for our concord with the earth brings weariness: that every movement which expresses our defiance of it brings upon man earth's retribution, let the ugliness and misery under which men groan to-day attest. The reader may object. "If you contend that the relationship of man and the earth is of primary importance, how can you consistently speak evil of an age whose scientific discoveries have increased the intimacy of that union more rapidly than all the sentient learning of any former period?"

The question betrays a fetish of modern thought, for the harmony of which I speak is a spiritual understanding and no mere mental acquisitiveness. By all means let us increase our knowledge. As the copy-book told us, "Knowledge is Power" but power without wisdom is a curse—the fruit of the tree of knowledge. We can live only upon the fruit of the tree of life. Instead of marrying us to the earth this scientific business is really designed to impale the angels dancing upon the metaphysician's needle-point. It craves for material exactness in a world of infinity. It promises to give us mastery over the earth—to make us masters of our own mother! It fills us with intellectual pride, desolating the heart and closing up the senses, those "chief inlets of the soul in this age". When

exact thought (fond phrase!) can give birth to a human child let us worship and adore its offspring, but until then let us not be deceived by it. We felt our way into the world, let us continue to feel it through the world. Thought without feeling is worthless and indeed predatory. History will write one damning sentence over the scientific age. It was inhuman.

Pure knowledge has no direction. It fills the coffers of life with coins. It stacks the house of life with furniture, and this it collects without regard to the needs of the occupant, until it ends by crowding a man out of his own house. In a measure this has already come to pass. To what purpose have we applied our knowledge? Has our use of scientific discovery been in the direction of happiness, or has it been made to serve almost exclusively the ends of materialism? Has the application of our knowledge of electricity and magnetism and all the other prodigious feats (oh tell-tale words!) performed by science increased the sum of human happiness? Or are we little better than fractious children ever tiring of one mechanical toy and crying out for another, flattering ourselves the while that our restless ingenuity will somehow land us in wisdom and happiness?

The world's conceit of its toys has become ineffable. Ingenuity receives the freedom of the city while wisdom cries aloud in the street. We are no longer masters of science but slaves to it. Science has developed into a tyranny, and so complete has our enslavement become, we are fast losing any power of choice in our ways of life. Senseless, soulless mechanism is imposed on us at every turn, and life is debased to a scientific competition which threatens to destroy the man who will not endure it in a vortex of wheels.

Here, sooner or later, man will be forced to make a supreme effort of self-control. Clearly distinguishing

between the means to life and the purpose of life, he will deliberately refuse some invention which promises to fulfil the means, while it obviously misleads him from the purpose. The time is coming when he will possess sufficient moral virtue to say to some soul-destroying device of mechanism "You offer me bread without the sweat of my brow, but I refuse your offer knowing not only that your bread contains poison, but that this body of mine must sweat or die "

Our worship of means is only one symptom of the disease which necessitated the operation of war. The insane idolatry of speed every man reviles and none can escape is only another. Children delight in speed for its own sake, but men of full growth are now compelled to it by a fury armed with the scorpions of poverty. Our vast vulgar affection for money is another. Materialism has only to dangle the golden carrot before our noses to lead us where it will. We have welcomed the "harmless spur" of competition. With what result? The insane rider has spurred our honest beast of burden through fields of blood to the borders of famine.

Whether we can or cannot change the direction of society by establishing a fresh sense of values, whether we can or cannot act upon the truth this war has rediscovered to the man in the trenches, that "a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth", for the sake of human decency let us have the honesty to confess our disease. Let us at least acknowledge the fact that our civilisation has now, definitely and unashamedly, given itself over to the worship of mammon. No longer do we attempt to hide the fact under the veneers of diligence, industry, prudence, providence, capacity, benevolence and all those specious guises of pseudo-altruism which so shadily passed muster sixty years ago. "Money tells" now, and the "captain of industry" is an

object of small envy and veneration when he stands beside our modern colossus, the multi-millionaire Religion knows full well where the treasure of the modern world lies, as with one hand she extends a minatory finger and with the other fondles doles from the oppressors of the poor

Looking back, it is not hard for the unprejudiced observer to see what happened in the sixty years culminating in the war. We became conscripts to Industrialism, Competition drove us aboard as sheep, Greed cut the cables, Science lied of the Hesperides, Speed turned cart-wheels to prevent thought, and we left our moorings, to drift faster and faster on the tide of materialism which even now avoids the questions, Why and Whither? The people's vision, what is it? "Where there is no vision . . ."

They *have* perished. Our civilisation may be known by its fruits. On every battlefield in Europe they lie shaken from the tree of life.

Who can assault the entrenched hosts of avarice? Has justice any guns comparable with those the law continually uses in support of the sons of Cræsus? Who can save our children from the bloody iron hand of materialism? Who can destroy this modern Moloch? Who can push the shilly-shally Church from Sinai to the Mount of the Beatitudes?

Well, my mud-stained seer, you broke the line of Hindenburg, but a greater than Hindenburg is here. You faced death, you have now to face life. But out of the simplicity of death you may discover the outlines of a new simplicity of life. It needed a strong will to face death continually for years, it needs a stronger will to face life with a clear ideal, and not flinch. You demand life. Retain your ideal, maintain your will and you can have it. Take the line of simplicity, for you will never unravel the complexity which has passed for civilisation.

Remember, your demand changes the direction of civilisation. If you are to be the highwayman of the future, make this demand. "Not your money, but my life." Death showed you what was essential and what extraneous to that life. Hold fast by the essentials. You saw life—your life—clearly then, and it was worth having. As you are faithful to that revelation, so will your life become what with your deepest instinct you have always desired it to be. Do not expect to be endowed with it. No State can confer it upon you. No Church, by any sacrament, can bestow it. Think. Your individual life is the gift of God. Value it accordingly. Do not debase His image by allowing the stamp of slavery—that mark of the beast—to be put upon it. Never, under any press of circumstances, or for any temporary advantage, allow yourself to undertake employment which your spirit knows to be beneath the dignity of a man, as such, to fulfil. Nothing can be too menial and nothing too exalted if you are able to see in it the maintenance of that harmony between you and the earth, between you and your fellow-man, which is the basis of all civilisation. Just as nothing can ultimately condone employment, however nominally exalted, which by its defiled or inhuman nature threatens or destroys that harmony.

Remember that work which is purely competitive is immoral. The spirit of competition is dishonest, for it says: "Do this, not for its own sake, or for its beauty or utility, but to prove that you are cleverer than another." Inevitably it necessitates serving two masters: the work itself and a wholly irrelevant onlooker. The insecurity and inherent rottenness of things competitive is illustrated in the words: "A double-minded man is unstable in all his ways." The selfish satisfaction you may find in competitive work has no joy in it, whereas joy is never absent from work done with singleness of purpose. If you do the work

of a scavenger because you believe it to be useful and purposeful work which you can do efficiently, you are a man among men and have the joy of scavengering. But if between the pleasure derived from your work and the money you receive for it the balance of pleasure lies with the money obtained, then by the degree to which the scales incline you are a wage-slave and something less than a man. For you, life must always be a secondary consideration. You have inversed the order of Nature, which is that by the full expression of their joy all things find their supreme utility.

Henceforward, test life in the light of your own birth. You know that you were born by a natural miracle of love and that for a hallowed space of time your needs were all another's care. In that simple truth lies the secret of life. You did not make your own life, and when you say it came of love you use words of whose full significance mortal man has never yet become aware. You were born of love. Love is your birthright. Know then, that except by love you cannot truly live at all, and that life with one insistent cry from the cradle to the grave, ay and beyond, does but call for that active co-operation of your spirit which is the conscious manifestation of love. There is no other life. Let this consciousness be your continual pride and confidence and you will reset the values of life and stamp upon them the indelible superscription of virtue. This way lies happiness. There is no other.

If love should ever seem to you a weak, effeminate thing, be sure it is some travesty of love obsesses you, for remember that love is always the sole cause of life. And if it is in this spirit that you demand the right to live, nothing on earth can withstand you. Your demand for natural life will find its echo, faintly at first, but with ever-increasing volume in those halls of Westminster which are now little more than the seats of the money-changers. It will echo

there because the purpose of true government is to assist the passage of virtue. Liberty, equality and fraternity will not seem to you the vague ideals of foolish dreamers. Living in the sight of life as death showed it to you, you will recognise them as embodying your desire. Indeed you will discover that you never truly desired life upon any other terms.

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If a child is born has it a right to live?

I hear the equivocations of the times

'If possible', is the commonest response, and the bountiful earth heaves with its rebuke

'It all depends on its parentage', pipes the inhuman voice of science. Since God is Love and since every child is to some measure born of love, science must learn not to blaspheme

'No right, but a conditional privilege', says the subtlest of liars. Once, in a wilderness, the lonely prophet of Galilee gave fitting answers to him who offered life as a conditional privilege

I do not presume to answer the question, except with this evasion. Ask the child's mother

What then remains? Only the reflection that all men are but children of larger growth

POSTSCRIPT. THE RIGHT TO LIVE (1939)

IT is a chastening thought that there is not a man living in the world to-day who has been able to maintain his own existence. Putting the same truth in another way. If the struggle for the means of subsistence were carried on strictly according to the rules of individual capitalist economy, the whole of the human race would die out in a generation, and the earth would be left to those sub-human animals which can find their own nourishment from the day of their birth. It is interesting to reflect that Nero's life depended upon his mother's milk and that without the pure gift of material sustenance from another human being—which apart from charity would have been withheld—he could not have existed on this planet for a week. I say it is a humbling and a chastening thought in the world of 1939.

For what western man is being driven to inexorably is the discovery of the basic principles of his life. We have become inured to the idea of the struggle for existence and educated into the belief that nature, red in tooth and claw, requires of each one of us an uncompromising fight for individual existence. Self-preservation is described as the first law of nature, and in the belief that it is therefore the basic law of our lives the child is taught that competition for the means of life is the only assured means of self-preservation. In other words, the social law of love—without which we cannot exist in infancy for more than a few hours—is slowly abrogated and for it is substituted the law of competitive struggle, not with nature, but with our fellow-creatures.

Directly the means of existence is regarded as an object to be competed for, there must ensue a desire on the part of

everyone to make some sort of a protective corner in the means of existence. Man inevitably defends himself against competing man, and in doing so the competition inevitably becomes intensified. Thus the primary struggle with nature is diverted from the true antagonist and becomes a competitive fight for life between man and man. Meliorated and disguised by a thousand compensating and strictly human activities, this competitive struggle for security of life goes on becoming necessarily more and more intense, until finally the ordinary means of gaining self-advantage prove insufficient to whole bodies of men, who find themselves, again inevitably, ranged against one another in the struggle for the means of life. Follows war as naturally as night follows day. War will in fact continue to be the *normal* activity of man so long as competition for the means of subsistence is regarded as a basic rule of human life.

The idea that it is, is due to the mistaken belief that each one of us lives to himself. What we are now required to contradict—not merely in idea but in act—is the belief that self-preservation is the first law of human nature. For it isn't. It is the first law of the unconscious beast, and man of course inherits the instinctive traits of the most ruthless of the animals red in tooth and claw. But man is conscious, and consciousness means what it implies—understanding of process. And man is aware of the fact that the cause of his life is the love of one human being for another—that without that love he would have no existence, and that without the active expression of that love after his existence had begun he himself would never have lived long enough to acquire consciousness of existence. Hence it follows that the idea that each one of us ought to be self-sufficient, and that this is our principal duty, is not founded upon biological fact. Birth and infancy show us that we are basically dependent upon one another and that the primary law of our life is that we shall be dependent for our

lives upon the love of others. Love, and not self-preservation, is the first law of human nature. Self-preservation is rooted in self-love, and no one's existence can begin in self-love. Love is the passion of one object for another, and the object that makes itself its own passion is outside the law of productive human life.

I am brought back to these old considerations by the thought of the refugees and by the way in which our western civilisation is responding to the greatest of all its problems. Western civilisation is of course not responding to the problem. It is trying to evade it. But it lies, in my thinking, at the root of all others. With it we come to the heart of the matter, which is nothing more or less than the right to live.

Twenty-two years ago I wrote what I thought might prove to be a last will and testament. I was expecting to return to the Western Front, and being a subaltern in the infantry, reasonable expectations went no further. But I had had three years in which to consider the world war, and the reasons for it, from the acute angle of one who was experiencing it, so I decided to say my say as concisely as possible while I had the chance. The result was a penny pamphlet which, with all its crudities and insufficiencies, seems to me to be at least worth more than all I have written either before or since. And I hope readers will pardon this outburst of egotism when I add that the pamphlet is unobtainable and has long since been out of print.

The reason that pathetic document interests me to-day is because it bears the title *The Right To Live* and was an attempt to discover wherein this right inheres. It is significant, to me at least, that now in 1939 I should find myself consciously facing the problem I could only state half-consciously in 1917. This problem was then as now not *my* right to live but the other fellow's.

Does birth confer the right to live?

No, there is no right inherent in birth. Birth is merely the means that provides the opportunity for life. Life is a gift which we receive at the hands of . . . Of whom? That is the question. Whole philosophies hang upon our answer to it.

At the hands of our parents is the most obvious answer. True enough, but in their separate individualities they have no power to transmit life. So back we come to the basic truth that life is the offspring of love, and to the corollary, no love, no life. And thus it becomes simple and rational to say that God is love.

Love, then, is seen to be the human creature's birthright, the fundamental necessity of his life, the mainspring of his action and the element by which his growth is conditioned.

In that murder is punishable, the criminal law of all civilised countries recognises negatively the right of the individual to his life. But the right to maintenance stands upon another footing. Roughly speaking, the adult is held responsible by law for his own maintenance, and parents are responsible for the maintenance of their children. The placard of the *Kilburn News* I saw last week, "Baby Found in Dustbin", probably registers the fact that some girl's power of maintenance came short of her legal duty, and that Sir Leonard Hill's recent plea for a rapid increase of population had been insufficient to her circumstance. Our civilisation really denies thousands of well-born infants the right to live.

That has always been the case, but what we are now required to recognise is that unless the human family can concede to its members both the right of life and the right to the means of maintenance, we shall, before long, not merely need to re-arm as nations but to re-arm as individuals. When that happens we shall revert to a condition lower than savage man in the murderous fight for the means of life.

That is the obvious lesson of the refugees. If we, as

civilised human beings, cannot or will not concede to them the right to live and the right to the means of maintenance, then we ought to do something about it if only to prevent them from wreaking their natural vengeance upon us. If they have become superfluous to human society, then it becomes our obvious duty to rid ourselves of superfluity. If society wants neither refugees nor unemployed, let us have the common honesty to say so and act accordingly, for Blake's well-known proverb applies here "Sooner murder an infant in its cradle than nurse unacted desires." So the question with which the world really stands confronted is Ought we to kill off the refugees? We have the power. Is it advisable? And if this question seems shocking or extravagant, does it not seem so only because it is an honest question concerning a problem we hope we shall be able to evade if we keep our eyes averted from it while we drop a copper in Lord Baldwin's hat?

The political philosophies of the last century taught men to demand the right to a living wage on the ground that a full day's work deserved it. They are still taught to clamour for a living wage though the machine increasingly takes over the work. What does this show but that the original demand was made upon a wrong because an insufficient basis? As industrial competition increases and as the machine takes over more and more, for what can the so-called "working" man appeal? For the right to receive the dole. For the right to be maintained as a parasite upon the existing economic body. On what ground? On the ground of national birthright.

The unemployed were of course the first real symptom of the collapse of western civilisation. The second and more dramatic is the appearance of the refugee. For in that he is a refugee he is without nationality, and in that he is without nationality he has no ground on which to demand the means of maintenance from anyone. Here in England—

the land of the free, the home of democracy—we will not have him unless he has means not only sufficient for his own maintenance but for the maintenance of some of our own unemployed, or unless some individual possessing wealth will go surety for his perpetual private maintenance and for his permanent abstention from any form of remunerative labour. We have in fact instituted a new Means Test for the Middle Class, and it is framed in such a form that the offer of ordinary human hospitality by any Britisher can only be made if the man or woman who wants to save an alien from death is possessed of a large enough bank balance to purchase a ruinous bipped-licence from an extremely reluctant government official.

And still official Labour is not much interested in the Refugee Problem! Still we fail to see the logic of the system as it works internationally. Labour, instead of identifying itself with the proletarian outcasts of the world, is chiefly concerned to maintain trade union wages. Which means that it does obeisance to the existing order provided that order will keep the wages of such British workmen as happen to be in work above the starvation level. *How* this is accomplished does not appear to matter. The fact that it can be achieved only by compelling men to make the means of their own destruction is persistently glossed over. The fact that it means buttressing and fortifying the system which creates the refugee problem is disregarded. Labour declines to see that in permitting the segregation of the unemployed and in conniving at the ostracism of the refugees it is destroying its own political foundation, ranging itself on the side of capitalism in the class war, and thus betraying the only proletariat that exists to-day, the international proletariat of the—humanly speaking—unwanted.

Civilisation, it is said, would collapse under another world war. Civilisation has already collapsed. the refugees

are plain evidence of the fact. A civilisation which will not concede to its members the right to work—which is the human equivalent to the right to live—is no longer entitled to be called a civilisation.

Plainly what we must do is to begin building a new civilisation. Upon what foundation? Upon the belief—call it religious, humane, social, what you will—that human life is a sacred gift which it is only human to cherish and bestial to destroy—upon the belief, springing from the Human Imagination, that the other fellow has the right to live which it is ours to concede him.

THE TEST OF RELIGION

THE religions of the past are statements of experienced value made by men in the past. They represent the assessments of the wisest men of their day concerning the real goods at the disposal of mankind at a certain period of time. As time goes on, the goods change in number and in kind, and if the old valuations no longer obtain, the religion dies and needs to be replaced by another. If another is not forthcoming there is a relapse towards chaos. A sense of values, and therefore a religion of some sort, is a necessity to man, or his world becomes like a house full of junk. Without a sense of values there can be no order, for apart from value nothing can be given its place: the worthless jostles the priceless and the house of life falls to the level of a thieves' kitchen.

Science is essentially without a sense of values.

That is merely a statement of fact: no one who understands the essential nature of science could imagine it to be a disparaging comment, for it is essential to science that its objects should be immune from human preference and be regarded from the standpoint of phenomenal existence and inherent potentiality. The virtue of science is its freedom from bias in favour of man: its pure objectivity is its triumph. And as a means of examining, describing, and cataloguing the world's goods—as a means of bringing them to man's understanding and laying them out before him so that he may exercise choice, science is man's perfect handmaid. But just as the mistress of a house continually exercises choice in the use of her household goods, and would not dream of relying upon a servant's estimate of her needs, so man is called upon to exercise his own deliberate

subjective choice, without dreaming that science has either the right or the power to do this for him

But in the past hundred years we have acted as though science possessed just such authority. We have behaved like a child who discovers a treasure and is so delighted with its find that it neglects to eat its breakfast. We have, to a lamentable extent, established a dictatorship of science, and accepted factual knowledge for wisdom. We have acted as though objective knowledge were all-sufficient, which is to accept the child's treasure in lieu of breakfast. Objective knowledge is one thing; subjective behaviour is quite another, and the maintenance of life obviously depends upon the latter. I may know all about food, but unless I eat it I shall starve. Moreover, I must eat according to choice and appetite, and not primarily according to the most perfect knowledge of vitamins, because it is I who must eat and the value of vitamins is wholly subjective and potential. Everything in the world has potential value, but millions of things of the highest interest to science and of incalculable value potentially are absolutely valueless to me.

The common complaint is that science has invaded the territory of religion, and the world is out of joint in consequence. That is a platitude, but also a bad statement of the case, because strictly speaking science does not, and could not, possess the power to invade anything. All that has happened is that science has been strong in an era in which religion was weak. Man, in his regard for things, has allowed his sense of the comparative values of things to decline. It is idle to spend much time lamenting this; those who do so proclaim their enfeeblement. It represents a swing of the pendulum. The material gain is great and is to be enjoyed. But the point is that it can only be enjoyed as the pendulum swings back to the appreciation of values. That this is so is now made clear to us by the increasing anti-social tendencies of wealth, the appalling

tendency to superficial mechanised living, and such facts as the existence of a caste called "the unemployed," the preponderance of goods over purchasing power, and the limitation and destruction of goods in a world where millions are needy. Every sensible person recognises that we cannot go on indefinitely with a style of life which automatically increases the tendency to such things.

It is indeed high time and past for the pendulum to swing back. And it will not swing back of its own accord. We have got to swing it. Man is the mechanism that swings the pendulum according to his desire. It is for him to swing it back. And this does not imply, as some believe, a neglect of science, disuse of the machine, and a crawl back into the Middle Ages. All knowledge is expressive of potential value, not merely to the body, but to the soul, and those who would neglect it are the enemies of the soul. What it means is that the great gains of an age of materialism must be consolidated by a new sense of values, or the gains themselves, for want of proportioned appreciation, will become worse than losses because they will exercise the tyranny of matter powerfully set in motion and out of control. They will destroy the men that made them. It is because that process has already begun that thoughtful people of all shades of opinion begin to look with foreboding upon the future of our civilisation.

Many are agreed that a revival of religion is needed. And there they stop, like the man at the Pool of Bethesda, not knowing how or where to begin. They are "so haggard at the heart, so care-coiled, care-killed, so fagged, so fashed, so cogged, so cumbered" by disenchantment and by the linen garments of the dead forms of religion, which still lie unfolded, that the very word religion—the word of hope—is expressive also of nausea. The word itself has for so long stood for so much that is clearly dead. They thus lack terms even to express their desire. All the old

terms are soiled with the effects of death, and even hope itself, because it puts reliance in the future, seems insufficiently immediate and bears the taint of suspected other-worldism. They want to move at once, and powerfully or not at all, and they feel surrounded by decay. They are sickened by the voice of the sentimentalist who thinks that all we need is a little more kindness and the dead bones will begin to move. They are undeceived by pseudo-religious metaphysicians crying up abstraction as a substitute for spirit and form, and they are only made cynical by the religion of the scientists which looks for all the world like a self-conferred halo about an otherwise common-sense head.

So that the very persuasion that the powerful constraint of religious belief is alone able to swing the pendulum, only increases the general mood of hopelessness. In this hopelessness, men split inevitably into two opposing camps, which they join according to their natural dispositions. The men of feeling go to the left. They abandon religion on the ground of its outworn theology and its reliance upon a supernatural world, and for it they substitute a theory of humane political government. The men of intellect go to the right. They move back on to the traditional ground of religious belief for the sake of intellectual form. They ornament and decorate the tomb of dead faith, set an intellectual watch upon it, and disguise their loss of integrity by a theory of sufficiency of belief. In short, the two sorts of men become either Communists, varying in colour from pale pink to blood red, or adherents (and the word may be given its full meaning) to the Catholic Church or some offshoot respectably near the parent stem.

This effort at self-determination gives to both parties a creed, and each, by opposition, gives the other the sense of life and importance. But it may be gravely doubted

whether both parties are not sadly conscious of having accepted and raised their opposing standards because nothing better seemed feasible. Their banners were woven in despair—the one by those who in desperation fell back upon the logic of circumstance, the other by those who in desperation fell back upon traditional form through sheer lack of living faith. Both banners are deep-dyed in pessimism and designed by minds that wrought in pain. Both are upheld by creeds to be maintained with clenched teeth and an eye fixed upon the enemy.

What is it that they lack?

They lack that unfailing accompaniment of new birth—joy. And joy, as Coleridge said

“Joy, Lady, is the spirit and the power
Which, wedding Nature to us, gives in dower
A new Earth and new Heaven.”

Are such forms of religion good enough for the task before us? Can they endow the spoils of science with meaning and purpose? Does either of them possess sufficient power to focus the faith of mankind and, without regression either material or intellectual, bring new authority into the discordant activities of the world? Are they not new representatives of a very old antithesis that needs a new synthesis to solve its quarrel?

The world needs a new simplicity of faith. True synthesis, when it comes, always comes attended by simplicity. It appears like the crown above the head of Bunyan's man with the muck rake. Not until we reach a simple resolution which dissolves our enmities shall we have attained to the kind of faith the suffering world cries out for to-day. It will leave untouched much that seems highly important now. It will pass by many of our unanswerable questions. It will fix attention upon what matters to us most, and in so doing will wean us from the everlasting contention upon questions that achieve their

importance through the strife they create. The faith that we want to-day is the faith that will compel us to cease from contention about matters that are not all-important to us, personally. It is a faith that will give us a new conscience toward God and toward man.

Religion begins in subjective experience like charity, it begins at home. New religion will only come about through the self-examination of him who desires it. To realise that the recovery of vital religion lies at the heart of every insurgent problem of modern life, and then to announce our realisation with the air of a man convicting the world of original sin, is to be guilty of the supreme Pharisaism. If we have no light, the announcement of darkness to men in the dark is merely insolent conceit, and the gesture of throwing up our hands, which accompanies such a statement, has no finality about it. It is merely an acknowledgment of impotence. Nothing is begotten of dismay. Religion is not a sort of magic which we trust it may please the gods to rain down upon us if only we can endure one another long enough. It is not an intellectual problem which we may work out if only we are clever enough, neither is it an emotional geyser which may erupt any time. It does not belong to the order of phenomenon which any right-minded man can recognise, if only it will appear. Moreover—and this above all is important—it is not in its true inception a confederacy of like-minded people sincerely anxious to propagate views of any sort whatsoever. Religion, we reiterate, begins in personal subjective experience.

Whitehead has defined religion as what a man does with his solitude. In solitude we are compelled to subjective experience. Back, right back from the wide circumference of the world and its needs, to the subjective centre of that world, which is our own individual identity, we needs must come if we truly desire to know where vital religion

is to spring from. For religion is the one thing a man need not wander about in search of. It lies within its seed is in every man, and its seed has been likened to a grain of mustard "which is indeed the least of all seeds, but when it is grown is the greatest among herbs." *And the test of religion is whether it is a man's own.* That it should express itself coherently in a philosophy that is persuasive to other men's minds is not the vital necessity, for many an incoherent faith which is intellectually ludicrous is of immense value. *The only test of religion worth making is whether it is true-born whether it springs from the deepest consciousness of the individual whether it is the actual fruit of experience, or whether it is anything else whatever.*

Thus we dismiss as entirely misleading the hope of discovering some form of religion which people with similar views may agree to accept, for that is to approach the problem from the wrong end. "All religions are one"; therefore to have religion is to have community which *must* express itself and stands in no need of artificial construction. Agreement is only possible to a man with a mind of his own, and until a man has made up his mind he seeks, not agreement, but adherence, and adherence is the habit of the parasite. That we stand in need of a religion to adhere to is a false idea—the Pharisaic idea we arrive at by looking without instead of within. That, quite clearly, was the teaching of Jesus, and it will be remembered that it was the Pharisees who knew the form of religion to which he should have adhered.

Following Whitehead, I should like to define religion as what a man makes of his experience. The real problem of existence is not whether the universe is coherent, but whether our experience in it is coherent. Has our experience any meaning, and does this meaning seem to us coherent with all meaning? does it link up with an ultimate sense of value? A satisfying religion is to be recognised by the

sense of gratitude for the experience of life which it begets. No religion is worthy of a man unless it gives him a deep and abiding sense that all is well, quite irrespective of what happens to him personally. The resolution of experience, which is religion, is only complete when it creates generosity of heart—that spontaneous goodwill that arises from inmost well-being.

In its expression religion is the overflow of that generous heart. Blake calls it “brotherhood”. Here we come back to man, not pitifully claiming that he is to be recognised as lord of the universe, nor looking to him to be an exemplar of any such impossibility, but loving him spontaneously, without hope of return, simply because love is a river that must find the sea, and the divine image in every man is the end of human love.

Because such love is not reasonable, philosophers have denied its possibility. Freud, insisting upon the incurability of human discontents, denies the psychological possibility of love for enemies, showing that such love must be worthless because it is not based upon a sense of justice. If I love my enemies I lessen the value of my love for my friends, and give to worthlessness what merit deserves. To such a pitch of futility can philosophy founded in materialism lead us! To confute it we need only glance at the child that radiates its happiness, not according to the merit of its environment, but out of its own native delight in living.

“Ah! from the soul itself must issue forth
A light, a glory, a fair luminous cloud
Enveloping the earth”

What has been known by men in the past can be known by men in the present. This light, this glory issuing from the soul that has tasted joy at its source has been known and experienced by the men and women whom we are disposed to call saints. Their works follow them, and all that is

most estimable in our civilisation is their priceless bequest. And the finest gift of their spiritual largesse is not their heroism, their fortitude, their integrity, their appeal to ideal principle, but their witness to the truth that love is not according to merit but springs from an unfathomable well-spring, as innate as hunger, as incommensurable as God.

Is it necessary to meet the objections of those who see in this sense of individual well-being nothing but a personal self-concern? What reply have we to make to the objection that all self-concern is morbid, and to the opinion that a man's duty is to society, and when he thinks about himself he is indulging in wasteful introspection?

First, that individual man is a prerequisite of society. Second, that an elementary knowledge of psychology teaches us that, in the order of natural growth, self-realisation must come before there can be any real appreciation of the claims of society. Third, that he who does not deliberately cultivate introspection (in its literal meaning) lives either in ignorance or in fear of himself, and will transfer his ignorance or fear to any society to which he belongs.

Job had friends who raised just such objections. They knew that his sin was self-concern. Job knew that, too, but he also knew that his concern went further and was with the living God. Of course, subjective experience that remains subjective and is unable to find an object for its love and worship, festers and becomes egotism. Egotism lies in wait for consciousness. It is the curse of consciousness, the disease which afflicts it, and the pit into which we continually fall. It is self-love, the inversion of love. But the poles are not so far apart as is the realisation of God from the self-gratification that follows upon the belief that man in general, or in particular, is his own star. Those who dismiss as morbid introspection the individual soul's deepest concern do not know what experience is. Their advice to anyone suffering birth-pangs in the womb of

experience, that he should merge himself in the happy or unhappy mass, is retrogressive of life itself. For the soul is born of individual experience of self-knowledge and the suffering attendant upon it, which to evade is—in a very deep sense—not to have lived at all.

God is the only object great enough for the love of man. In order to find God, man must explore the caverns of his own heart and mind. When he comes to the inmost recess of his own soul, lo! God is there. God, not man, another, not himself, the object of his heart's delight, which could not delight his heart were it himself, the reason, cause, meaning, fulfilment and consummation of life, its centre and circumference. And only as subjective experience is fulfilled and God is thus realised objectively, can anyone know that well-being which is the infallible sign of religious experience. Against such a one the charge of selfishness fades on the air, for to love another with the whole heart is to be incapable of self-regard, and the realisation of God is by definition and in act the only absolute freedom from self-concern.

THE PROBLEM OF WAR AND PEACE

[*Address to a Socialist Summer School*]

I AM told that all things are seen by the human eye as standing on their heads, and that it is only through the action of the mind that they appear in their true position. Possibly it is thus that we see the problem of War and Peace. Can it be that we see it with great clarity, only we have not yet developed the intelligence to rectify Nature's mirror, and, in consequence, always see the problem upside down? I rather fancy our descendants may think so. However, as William Blake said

"What seems to be, is, to those to whom
It seems to be, and is productive of the most dreadful
Consequences to those to whom it seems to be, even of
Torments, Despair, Eternal Death,"

and it is Pacifism in a world suffering from Torments and Despair that we have to consider

"Pacifist" is an unpleasant word. If you come to think of it, it stands for an unpleasant thing. Socially it denotes a Protestant, and while it may be morally noble to be a Protestant, socially, it is unpleasant. I always feel a little uncomfortable when people say to me "Then, are you a Pacifist?" They remind me too much of the days when clammy-handed people used to ask me if I was "on the Lord's side." I was tempted to hope so for their sakes, but to hope not for my own. One hates to be odd. Anyone who wants to change or modify the order of society must dislike ostracism. If he thinks he has discovered leaven, he naturally wants it to leaven the whole lump, and until that happens he can't be really happy. It is to prevent him from achieving his happiness at their expense that his opponents

give him an unpleasant name And thus it was, I think, that some genius coined the word Pacifist

It is, of course, an appellation which no right-minded Socialist can endure The right-minded Socialist naturally puts his Socialism before everything else He is part of the social body, and as such he recognises the fact that if you cut him off from the social body he is dead—mere cat's meat—no longer incorporate in the social organism—outside the true dialectical process So the difficulty of being a right-minded Socialist and at the same time a Pacifist is very great I am not here to minimise it I know that most of you are Socialists I hope you are Pacifists But how to be a right-minded Socialist (by which, of course, I mean a genuine Marxian Socialist) and a Pacifist at the same time, I do not know Not being a right-minded Socialist myself, it does not worry me, but that it concerns some of the contributors to *The Adelphi* pretty deeply must have been clear to you For Marxism is based on the conception of man as a carnivorous animal—as an economic unit seeking what he may devour—as a creature fighting for the means of subsistence And he is, of course, all these things Yet, as such, of course he cannot be a Pacifist I say “of course”, but if it is not obvious, let me put it in this way Communism is the Marxian antithesis to Capitalism In order to be a true antithesis (which I think Marxism is) Communism must possess force equal to that which Capitalism can exercise, and—Capitalism having the force of arms behind it—any conception of a fair fight between them cannot deprive Communism of the force of arms To be the true antithesis of anything you must possess its qualities, for the simple reason that action and reaction are equal and opposite. Of course, every great idealist, like Marx, looks forward to some sort of pacific millennium Marx's “Each for all and all for each” is his vague description of Utopia, but, please note, the Promised Land was

only to be entered "after the ball was over" When the dictators of the proletariat had got tired of dictating they would dissolve themselves like mists before the rising sun of pure Communism Then, and only then, man, having no material goods to fight for, would cease to fight and just enjoy the fruits of the earth like any social rabbit

Now, although I profess what will seem to some of you the wildest idealism, I should like to be practical, and directly we begin to address ourselves to the practical problem we become political Pacifism is a great amorphous subject that covers the whole ground of human conduct and belief, and in order to discuss it fairly, I think it was necessary to try and clear the ground For supposing freedom from war to be the desirable condition of man on earth, if there is already in existence a panacea which will provide it—if there is a political policy we have only to pursue with fidelity in order to achieve peace, then discussion of the matter from any theoretical standpoint is manifestly waste of time When a penny bus will take you to your destination you do not need to know the way And if by joining any of those organisations which collectively threaten to absorb the letters of the alphabet, we can provide ourselves with peace, refreshment and good form, there is clearly only one thing to do, namely, "pay up and look big" So you will, I hope, forgive me for going out of the way at the outset to explain that I do not think any political policy, in this or in any country, a guarantee of peace I will go further and say that I do not believe any *political* policy should have peace for its aim Why? Because, strictly speaking, it can only pretend to such a purpose. The sphere of politics is strictly confined Politics is, or should be, confined to the promotion of justice—rough justice at best, and to achieve justice is not to achieve peace Let politics be content to aim at justice Politics is a means of maintaining an unstable equilibrium for man's activities,

but it has in itself no initiatory power, and whenever it pretends to it, we do well to be suspicious. The sort of peace which politics can give us is a war to end war, and those who look to politics to provide them with blessings which are resultant upon human qualities which condition politics, are, in my opinion, preparing themselves for disappointment. They are in the same boat with those of our friends who cry "Give peace in our time, O Lord! Because there is none other that fighteth for us, but only Thou, O God." To both parties the words apply "Why stand we here trembling around, calling on God for help, and not ourselves, in whom God dwells . . ." For to expect a political policy to confer the condition of peace upon mankind is really to endow politics with magical if not divine attributes. Even in the smallest household, something more than good government is necessary to create and maintain peace, and what is true of a tenement applies in this respect to all the great households of the world.

Now to some of you, all this may sound very heretical and subversive. That, I think, will depend upon whether you have long or short memories. For remember *The Adelphi* is a peculiar magazine with a long and heretical history; indeed, it is hardly too much to say that *The Adelphi* was founded upon heresy by an arch-heretic. You may be a pious Socialist, but if you want to know the lengths to which individualism can go, read the first number of *The Adelphi*. And I would remind you that with its first number the foundations of *The Adelphi* were well and truly laid. Murry had struck something—not exactly oil—but something upon which the name and repute of *The Adelphi* were to be built.

So it is as a good heretic that I not only claim your indulgence, but the right to feel perfectly at home in asking you to consider carefully heretical doctrine. Good heretics have a way of going back to the foundations. It was the

case with Martin Luther The foundations of *The Adelphi* were laid in individualism they were definitely Protestant In a war-sick world, at that post-war period when the social consciousness was beginning to be dimly aware that the War itself had been a blind orgy, and the "Peace" a sickening failure expressive of the appetite for revenge which ultimately produces a sense of nausea even in the most revengeful—at that time, one man lifted up his voice and cried out for the discovery of new values He was very personal He declared that he wanted to discover them in himself And you know, whenever a man sincerely does that, he becomes interesting Here you will find the secret of Marx's success It is also the secret of Adolf Hitler's success At the opposite pole it was also the secret of the shining success of Jesus Christ This courage to declare the inadequacy of current notions—even to impersonate their inadequacy in oneself—is a kind of genius It puts a large interrogation before accepted stupidity it asks primary questions it voices thoughts and emotions common to men, but repressed by the weight of herd instinct. Even those who profess to pay no attention to such a protestant are only disturbed, because however deeply you bury truth, you cannot destroy its life

And to what did *The Adelphi* appeal? I submit that it appealed directly to the religious consciousness With that insight which comes at the inception of things, and has a clarity at its inception which it hardly recovers, Murry saw that unless you appealed to man as a religious animal, you were not appealing to him in his totality As an intellectual, he is a creature playing variations on an old theme As a politician, he is a man with weights and scales estimating existing values and endeavouring to arrive at a just equilibrium As a priest, he fulfils a similar office in the realm of theology But as a vehicle of consciousness, as an instrument of awareness. in a word, as a poet, man is a

creator of new value And with clear insight, Murry saw (and this, I think, will give honour to his name in the eyes of posterity) that for the last hundred years, society had failed to give value to the poet as the mouthpiece of religious values That is, of course, a very crude way of expressing it, it is not society which gives value to the poet, but the poet who announces value to society But I hope my point is clear It is that what I see Murry as announcing when he founded *The Adelphi* was the fact that we, as individuals, had become fundamentally disintegrated that the War was the dramatization of that disintegration, and that in order to make re-integration, we, as individuals, had got to rediscover a religious view of life

Why do I trouble you with this essay in history? Because I think that anyone who regards himself as generally speaking on the side of peace, is not only *not* in that position, but is definitely fuel to the fire of war *unless* his pacifism is merely one facet of his religious attitude to life In other words, what I still call secular—as distinct from religious—Pacifism seems to me merely stupid It is without warrant It is merely a temporary inclination of social meliorism It isn't logical It is merely a matter of taste, and rather gross taste at that, for it is an expression of a personal or a social desire for comfort It fails entirely to sublimate all the heroic virtues which war evokes It is basically an assertion of the almighty ego to the right of self-indulgence

And that is how the honest opponent of Pacifism regards Pacifists. Quite naturally, he sees them as shirkers of unpleasant duty people who do not care who or what sinks so long as they swim He sees them as people ready to take advantage of all that success in war has brought to a nation: as accepters of security upheld by strength of arms He sees them often as promoters and upholders of the most rigorous forms of commercial war, and always as members of a species which owes its biological position to its ability

to carry on a continual and entirely tyrannous war upon every species of life which it regards as lower than itself, or in any way threatening to its absolute supremacy And he says, very naturally "Your life is based on conflict which in its apotheosis is war By what right do you claim exemption from the duty of participation in it at some unknown point which you fix according to your own personal predilection?" And if you take up the position of a plain, straightforward, unequivocal, dialectical materialist, for the life of me I don't see that you have a leg to stand on I don't care whether you agree with the existing order of society or not if you believe that the ownership of the means of production by society as a whole, the establishment of the equalitarian state, or perhaps the advent of Social Credit, is going to create such a radical change in the hearts and minds of human beings that war will be abolished, then I think you are ready to believe that if a man goes to sea on an empty stomach he won't be sick

Marx said it is the business of proletarians "to destroy all pre-existent private proprietary securities and private proprietary safeguards", and it may be But what does he give as the reason for this? Because, he said "proletarians have nothing of their own to safeguard" Have they not, indeed? I should have thought it was fairly obvious that they had *lives* to safeguard The fact was painfully evident to several millions of them in the trenches And I think it ought to be perfectly clear to us that the preservation of racial life comes before any consideration of the order of social life At least, that is how it appears to me at the moment when war threatens not merely Capitalism, Fascism or Communism, but the existence of the species as a civilised animal

Seen from this angle, Pacifism becomes, not an academic debate for university students, but the cry of exasperated mankind "What shall we do to be saved?" And that cry

goes up. . . And the toll of armaments goes up. . .
"Join the Army and enjoy a man's life!" Double your
Air Force, and clap into gaol anyone seducing a member
of His Majesty's Forces from allegiance to the Devil Tell
Germany your frontiers are the Rhine that'll put the fear
of Baldwin into them! And weep for Peace, large crocodile
tears Assure her that you love her so dearly that she had
better prepare for sudden death "It's a mad world, my
masters"

A mad world? Who says so? The man who arraigns
the world as mad must himself be insane, for to condemn
the order of the universe is to commit intellectual suicide
The integral part is not in a position to pronounce judgment
upon the whole If we find the world mad, it is a sure sign
that we ourselves are wanting Wanting in what? Wanting
in fidelity to some principle latent within us which we
frustrate in order to condemn our environment.

What is the matter with man to-day is that he lacks
consonance with pre-existing harmony, in other words,
he is growing, and the principle of growth and the principle
of inertia are at war within him He doesn't want to grow
it looks too risky he wants to stay in the security of the old
bark, and yet, do what he will, this principle of growth,
impelling him to bud afresh, goes on within him Here is
this infernal question of war It demands a new attitude
from him He doesn't want to face it he wants to delegate
his responsibility, just as he did in the good old days when
it was sufficient to keep a standing army of inferiors to do
his fighting for him He still tries to persuade himself
that war is an impersonal matter of armed forces, taking
place between states, nations, and races But war presses
close upon him as an individual, and now threatens the very
keystones of his civilised life his wife and his children, and
the deepest den or cave of the earth in which he might seek
to hide them. War has come home to roost and now sits

on every housetop where the stork was wont to nest And with pathetic heroism and suicidal folly, man refuses to face the fact He simply cannot believe that the way of life which has, in some sort, suited the race for so long, has come to an end And because he possesses immense courage, and can see no alternative, he continues to rush violently down a steep place, only hoping that the others will get there before him and so give him a chance to change direction on the brink of the abyss

That sounds like fantastic exaggeration But is it? Isn't every nation in Europe hoping that war, as a contingency, will fall to any lot but its own, and at the same time pursuing a policy which in its complete expression is war? We are solemnly marching in extended order towards a precipice, in the hope that someone or something will trip us up before we reach the edge Once over the edge and we are in for something appallingly like race suicide

Let us go back a little I spoke just now about a religious attitude to life What precisely do I mean by that? I call a religious attitude one in which the individual himself accepts the burden of the incarnation of new value And why should any individual seek to do that? Simply because it is in the nature of man ardently to desire nothing so much The creative desire is innate in man his whole happiness is involved in this impulse to create Whether it be a family, or a new social order, or the harmony of sweet sounds, man for ever desires to co-operate with, and to surpass, the creative habit of Nature itself But, unlike the rest of Nature, man possesses consciousness, whereby he is able to direct the flow of his creative activity And that consciousness becomes a religious and, as I think, a complete consciousness only when it realises itself as the vehicle of a higher consciousness So long as we are merely *self-conscious*, we are not properly alive. We need

to lose our self-consciousness in order to find consciousness. And that is what happens, quite simply, whenever we love anything. Therefore to love is to have primary knowledge of the religious attitude to life. Children have this attitude continually: they are always doing what they like, and what they like is nearly always the simple expression of their love for something. Spontaneously they incarnate new value in themselves, and they themselves are the value they incarnate by their love of life. But when they grow up and come to self-consciousness, they lose their original religious attitude to life, because they have found something to which they cannot give their love, that is, themselves. You may say that plenty of people do. But in so far as they do, they lead lives of perversion: they jam the traffic of their senses and make themselves insensible to the occasions of experience, for no man can love himself and anything else at the same time.

Self-love is thus seen to be the suppression of creative desire, and to be fundamentally against the order of Nature, which is the continual expression of that desire. Hence it follows that the love of a grown person is conscious disinterestedness, and the purity of the love will be attested by the degree of disinterestedness. And it is thus that theology teaches us that the love of God is wholly disinterested.

Now a religious attitude to life is one which approximates to this perfectly disinterested creative attitude, to which thought, of necessity, has given a fixation in the person of God. But though we can see that man possesses the potentiality of that attitude, as we know him he is immeasurably far from it. The highest height of his ambition is the continuous maintenance of that attitude of conscious love expressing itself in complete disinterestedness. And—as Murry has shown in his study of Keats and elsewhere—it is as proximate examples of that attitude that the great

poets have their supreme value for us. That is why the attitude of every great poet to life is fundamentally religious. He lives by faith in something not yet incarnate in the body of life—something which becomes incorporate through his absolute fidelity to unique experience.

Thus the poet gives us, quite simply, the true pattern of human life. He shows us what wholeness, what integrity really mean—that they imply the submission of the whole man to a purpose beyond himself in faith that that purpose is the expression of life itself. There is no evidence that that purpose is the expression of life itself if there were, faith would not be required of him who lives by faith, for, make no mistake about it, the true poet lives by faith. But so much does he love what he knows by experience that he willingly offers himself as an instrument to that which he most esteems, believing that it will find purpose through him. The Book of Common Prayer gives perfect expression to his attitude in the words: "By giving up ourselves to Thy service." And until we know something about what that means, we cannot really abandon ourselves to the enjoyment of consciousness, but are plagued by the sense of self-responsibility, which is an effect of self-consciousness. In other words, we cannot be self-considerate and know wholeness or integrity at the same time. "By giving *up* ourselves." Self-surrender is involved. And that is a costly business. It means the acknowledgment of personal failure, the humiliation of personal defeat, the abject abasement of personal pride, it means the total loss of self-esteem.

THE PROBLEM OF WAR AND PEACE

II

INEVITABLY I seem to be describing something which has been known as "Conversion". I hope you are not disappointed. After all, the Socialists of my youth were emphatic about the need for "a change of heart". There is but one true pattern of experience, and something pretty radical has got to happen to us before self-interest becomes disinterestedness. If man is going to risk his life in any such unnatural enterprise as "loving his enemies", he must clearly forgo many of the privileges that belong to the creature "red in tooth and claw". Can a creature whose physical life depends upon his conquest of the animal world ever hope for peace on earth, or know that he is in truth a son of God? Only by such sublimation of his instincts and reorientation of his life as changes his whole direction. The man who first enunciated the idea of peace on earth didn't exactly get peace on earth for his portion, and if we desire to incarnate and incorporate that idea I do not imagine we are expecting to receive from the world to which we would bring the idea the outward form of a peace which has first to be an inward experience. No, Nature seen "*with* the eye", as Blake says, does not correspond with Nature seen "*through* the eye", that is, with Nature perceived by imaginative vision, and if we have faith to believe in peace on earth, we may be sure that it is by some sort of "giving up ourselves to Thy service", and *only* by such sacrifice that peace will ever be brought into being.

Perhaps I lay stress upon what seems to me the necessity for a complete change of mind before we call and profess ourselves Pacifists because my own experience of the change was so immediate and complete. I was sitting in an Army

tent at Chelmsford, reading Tagore on "Nationalism", considering the argument quite objectively, when suddenly I knew that I had no right to be in the Army. The conviction was immediate, and seemingly spontaneous. But it was ludicrous, absurd, impossible, beyond entertainment. There I was, very definitely in the British Army. It was futile to think I had no right to be. Then it was as if a voice added: "And now you have to come out of it." The decree was flat and so peremptory I could have laughed. But it was true, and I knew it. So there was simply nothing for it but to assent. A confounded nuisance, but there wasn't any option about it. "Right," I said to myself, "and that's that". Whereupon I had a sense of extraordinary elation, and with it an immense feeling of goodwill. This was hardly due to a sense of release from personal danger, for I thought at the time I might be asking to be shot, but at that moment I knew what the sailor feels when he comes to port, what Bunyan's pilgrim felt when the burden rolled off his back, what we all feel when we cease to live from our wills. I felt as if I had received a free pardon from spiritual death.

Of course I knew and felt that from one standpoint I was only another adjectival "Conchy" letting his pals down. Socially, I had on the instant become an outcast. It couldn't be helped. I had found nothing I did not wish to share, and Paul's reply to Agrippa was true of me. But every great decision in life has to be made in a man's soul as though it and truth existed alone in the world.

So it is that I find it impossible to discuss the question of Pacifism upon an intellectual or a political basis. For me, it is essentially a religious question. It frames itself like this: Can you, or can you not, in the full consciousness with which you are endowed as a human being, take part in war? When it comes to the real thing, the killing business, at whose command will you forgo the God-like

endowment of consciousness? For in the active consciousness which distinguishes a man from a beast, no human being *can* kill another. What it is that prevents him, I don't quite know, but I suspect that it is the fundamental love-law of his life. Of course, if you deny the spirit which expresses itself through human consciousness, then you are free from the law of the spirit for you, man is not made in the image of God, and you can take human life with the ease and complaisant sense of duty which the Roman soldiers doubtless felt at the Crucifixion. But if you believe that consciousness is a sacred mystery, and that through it man becomes what Paul described as "a temple of the Holy Ghost", then killing human beings will appear to you as a sacrilege you will not willingly commit under any conceivable circumstances. No devastating choice of fidelities will be involved. Your Pacifism will have become natural law.

For Pacifism is not the expression of a sentimental and exaggerated regard for the human body, but the acknowledgement of a religious reverence for the human spirit. It is simply because I have an absolute reverence for the highest potentialities in man, and because I believe those potentialities are incipient in *every* man, that I am a Pacifist. Let me put it in this way, asking forbearance of those to whom conventionally religious analogies are repellent. The incarnation of the divine idea is a slow and laborious business. In the spiral of man's ascent out of brutishness, the path is indicated by men who perceived the possibility of higher forms of life than the faith of mankind in general would admit. However desirable, such forms of life seemed to entail appalling risk—as when the Children of Israel marched out of Egypt at the behest of Moses—as when Jesus enunciated his principles in the Sermon on the Mount—as when resolute men determined that slavery should be abolished. But there is a principle in man whereby he is impelled to discover by experience whether a desirable

ideal, once formulated, is possible. And only by this process of experiment can man realise his potentialities. It is thus that the spiral is ascended—thus that the divine idea is being realised. So the clue to purposive living is to present ourselves with such awareness, such sensitiveness, such responsiveness to the contemporary movement of life that we can perceive its possibilities of transcendence, and by obedience to the insight thus acquired, initiate movement upon a higher plane. And in this matter of reverence for human life we have now reached such a moment. All down the ages we see the stock of human life steadily rising in value. First cannibalism is abolished, then human sacrifice. Philosophy in the East becomes entangled with the metaphysical idea that *all* life is sacred, and religion, misinterpreting the truth, initiates the worship of animals, but the search for new value in life goes on. Slowly and reluctantly society ceases to take vengeance upon diseased and insane persons, the leper is tended, the mad are no longer stoned. Slowly the old personal gratification at the execution of murderers is disowned. Dimly we foresee the time when criminals and lunatics will be treated as objects of human pity and remedial care, and no longer be relegated to the caste of untouchables. All these are signs of a growing desire in man for that hazardous day when, without equivocation, he shall establish the sacredness of human life as an inviolable principle. The divine idea is ready for a new incarnation. But unless we ourselves offer the bastard truth human parentage, it is incapable of birth. And what does its incarnation require of us?

It requires, in the terminology of William Blake, that we shall take the step in the dialectical process from the thesis of Innocence and the antithesis of Experience to the synthesis of Imagination. Man in his childhood has known Innocence. He has also known the contrary state of the soul, Experience. A climacteric episode in this Experience

was the Great War, and one would like to believe that the Great War was the culminant death-agony of that direful state. There, as you know, the policy of national, social and economic *laissez faire* showed what it was worth. It blew up, and the splinters are still falling. What was apparent then, and has since been made still more apparent, was that nations could not go on any longer in the old way, each blowing itself up, like the frog in the fable, till it burst. Everyone knew we must "do something." And our post-war history is the tale of the something. But, in the history of the human soul—of which the history of the world is the macrocosm—there is an essential condition to the transition from the state Experience to the state Imagination: it is the condition of repentance or a change of mind. And there is a sorrow unto repentance.

I don't know how it seems to you, but to me it seems as if we had all tried to skip that sorrow unto repentance. It wasn't particularly evident upon Armistice Day: it didn't exactly overwhelm the men who had their way with the Treaty of Versailles. And although there have been Leagues of Nations and Kellogg Pacts and Dawes Loans and many other expressions of diverse changes of mind since then, the only country which has come within sight of what can faithfully be called an imaginative effort is Soviet Russia, and there, the effort has been weighted with such chains of barbarism, and so rigidly confined by doctrinaire materialism, that Imagination, which first appeared like Noah's dove after the flood, seems to have been scared away, promising to settle anywhere rather than on the home of dictatorship.

Now, Innocence and Experience are natural states, but Imagination is not natural at all: it does not belong to natural evolution. Plenty of amiable people have lived and died quite comfortably without ever having achieved Imagination. Imagination is consciousness in activity.

It is the outward and visible working of an inward and spiritual grace. It is the means by which a man possesses the supernatural power actually to do unto others as he would they should do unto him. It is far more than the power to see ourselves as others see us, for that is mere self-awareness. In the highest form of Imagination we become what we behold. Imagination is love and understanding. It is the power of facing the truth, the hideous truth, and then loving it. It is the power by which man is transformed into the divine image. It is the power by which Englishmen enter into the hearts and minds of Germans, and feel as Germans feel, and think as Germans think, while at the same time they remain Englishmen and have equal capacity to feel as Frenchmen feel, and think as Frenchmen think. Imagination is the power by which natural instinct is sublimated and put in its place of delightful service to an appreciative master. It is the power—the only power—by which jealousy can be annihilated, for it is the power by which man is truly able to see another identically, and so put another before himself, not in canting humility but in sincere love and admiration.

Well, according to my definition, Imagination does not seem to be very busy in Europe to-day. And why should it be, when its currency in the closest relations of human life is so rare? The bane of politics is the belief that we can get a silk purse out of a sow's ear. We look for Imagination from politicians, but we shout for the Kaiser's head. I think Mr Lloyd George would have made a just and equitable peace in 1916 if at that time half the people of these Islands had possessed any imagination at all. As it was, being quintessentially a loud-speaker, he voiced our natural unimaginative passions when he cried "Beat them to the knees!" It was what everybody naturally wanted. And so the tale of "an eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth" goes on—indemnities, reparations, subjugation—corrupting

on, until the natural spawn of humiliation and resentment is brought forth in the shape of Nazi dictatorship, which we all deplore, and fearfully suspect, but for whose genesis we accept no responsibility whatsoever, preferring to believe that it came about because Germans are nasty

The evidence of elementary imagination is the ability to stop and think. This implies the power to hold the instinctive feelings in abeyance at a moment when they are stimulated by events. That is initially a very individual performance. Demagogues have so little belief in men's power to perform it that they treat it as negligible. In times of so-called national crisis, they make themselves mouthpieces of instinctive feeling and whip it into passionate frenzy, which in action is naturally physical.

This power to stop and think is the first motion of the only power that is going to rid us of war, for without it, our minds run into instinctive generalisations, and the instincts are the centies of fear. Basically, we fear everything that is not ourselves or which we cannot incorporate into ourselves. Thus, Germans are Germans and Japanese, Japanese, and so long as they remain generalised they represent instinctive forces that cannot but be feared, but if we see them as human beings, as men of like passions—if we can imaginatively enter into their lives, then we partake of their natures and they cease to be merely instinctive forces—they become individualised, and only so can social relations between them and ourselves take place. Because they represent difference, imagination is required to reveal likeness, and the most blessed truth of Socialism is this doctrine of the universal brotherhood of man, in which national distinctions and differences are surpassed and fundamental humanity is asserted. But we must hold this doctrine in its particularity before it can possess any general validity, and the first step in this direction is the imaginative act of an individual.

If you want to know how small a part imagination plays in our social and political life at the present time, take a look at a daily newspaper. How many of its columns would be even bearable if they were perused with eyes of sympathy and imagination? Wars and floods, international intrigues, murder, suicide, accident, tariffs, unemployment statistics how much appeals to your imagination? Not an item. The modern newspaper, with an eye to circulation, subtly presents the events of the day in such a way as to enable you to sit back and thank God you are not as other men. Psychologically it is designed to supply us with all the information we can accommodate to our personal comfort, personal superiority and personal irresponsibility. Self-complacency is the soul of the leading article without it, no leader-writer would ever get a job. And remember the newspaper is a mirror of social consciousness.

The reflection is depressing, but instructive if we want to find out why intellectual cynicism is so rife among us. It is because we have intelligence enough to see that most of the insane conflicts of the day are due to the want of "a little imagination", but not enough sincerity to cast the beam out of our own eye.

I said just now that the religious attitude to life implied the willingness of the individual to accept the burden of the incarnation of new value. I have tried to show that *there is no order in Nature corresponding to this willing sacrifice of the self to purpose beyond the self, and that it is therefore the height of folly to expect the incarnation of new value to come about by natural evolutionary process*. That which requires the dedication of anything to produce its effect obviously cannot be effected without such dedication, and in consciousness man possesses, what the rest of Nature does not possess, the instrument of self-dedication. *We* are the means whereby the redemption of Nature from the law of natural cruelty is to be effected. The only purpose of consciousness is to

effect this redemption. If we decline the burden and point to natural law as giving us conclusive proof that the redemption of the world by imaginative love is something that can never come about, we simply nullify the purpose of our lives through want of faith. We reject the means, the only means, whereby this process of redemption must be effected. And the appeal to natural law is pure atavism. Man alone can bridge the gulf that stands between self-interest and disinterestedness. He alone can transform the hunger of the beast into pure worship, and his nature is such that it is optional to him whether he remains a hungry animal preying upon death, or a vehicle of imaginative love communicating life. That he will be each by turns is in the nature of existence, but that he cannot rest content in pure hunger is his warrant for seeking the highest sublimation of his instinct.

I want to stress the point that nothing less than this sublimation of instinct in the individual can transcend the natural law which in physical nature expresses itself ultimately in war, because I think that our personal willingness to be submissive to this process of sublimation is the crux of the whole argument for and against Pacifism. The world is trying to get peace on the cheap. It wants all the benefits of Christianity and at the same time freedom to reject the cardinal doctrine upon which Christianity is founded. It wants the benefits of a principle which it denies in action. Hence its radical instability, its bewilderedness, its pursuit of opposing aims, its distracted desire for leadership, hence, above all, its frightful hypocrisy. And in face of the world's distraction, we only confuse the issue if we are merely Pacifists in revolt. Conscientious objection is poor stuff. It is unprincipled in so far as it is based on negation. We need to go deeper and to discover a faith of which Pacifism is only one expression. We need to understand so clearly what is involved that the question

to be or not to be a Pacifist, simply does not arise. we are Pacifists because any other determined way of life would be self-contradictory and impossible

And when we know that, individually—when we hold that conviction with simple religious tenacity, then we begin to provide a solid phalanx of determined people who have already begun to change current values. We may be small numerically negligible. We may be shot before the real activities of the next war begin, but we shall provide a nucleus for the new way of life which man must find, or perish. We shall not die dismally in the shell-holes of unfaith. we shall have “found a better hole”, and that, I submit, is the important discovery at the present time.

The simple resolution not to take part in organised armed conflicts because you believe such conflicts to be now humanly atavistic seems to sophisticated minds infuriating in its irresponsibility. The argument against such simplicity nearly always takes the form of “What would you do *if* . . . ?” The only correct answer to this question is: “I will tell you *when* . . . ” A new way of life, because it is new, rejects responsibility for the compact resolution of problems that belong wholly to the old order, and to be without regard for problems arising through the maintenance of a dying mode of life is essential to acceptance of the new. If you move into the country, your practical problem is not how you would live if you were still in town. Similarly, the Pacifist is unable to predict what would happen if men in general acted imaginatively and not merely instinctively. Practically speaking the problem does not arise, and any Pacifist who allows himself to be misled into arguments upon a suppositious basis does not know his book. Whether if you strike me on the right cheek, for what I have been saying, I shall turn to you the left, or punch you on the nose, only the event can determine. All I can say is that I will not willingly hire myself out to

any organisation which exists for the defence of smacked faces I will, on the contrary, try to have good manners I will try to impersonate them myself I will adore him whose manners are of transcendent beauty and, if my love for such an one is extensive, I may find it in my heart to love, to understand, and thus to be reconciled in forgiveness with my enemy And if two of us resolve the Problem of War and Peace in this way, I assure you the angels of heaven will rejoice, and set it upon record in the Book of Life that peace upon earth has taken one more step forward.

THE LIVING ELEMENT

A FEW bulbs are growing in bowls on my window-ledge. Outside, in the small suburban garden, there is a bed of roses flanking a patch of grass, and growing none too happily in the little shrubbery at the side of the house there is a single rhododendron.

These bulbs, those rose bushes, that lawn, and the struggling rhododendron are so interesting to me that I sometimes wonder whether my concern for them is not a mild form of obsession. What makes me gaze fascinated at a few very ordinary bulbs? What reason is there for pondering over a common rose bush as if it were the rarest object in the world? Could any reasonable person enjoy hovering above a patch of grass with hawk eyes for the sight of a weed, when no qualified horticulturist would dignify such a scanty, undulating plot by the name of a lawn? And as for the rhododendron, it is like the crippled child of a family living in a slum, which is what London clay is to all rhododendrons.

But these things grow, and therein lies their fascination and their mystery.

As our lives become more mechanised the appeal of everything that grows becomes clearer. Mechanisation involves an abstraction from life, an abstraction made for the sake of utility. No mechanised object retains its original life-quality. From being free and variable and independent it has been brought to static servitude, and its worth as mechanism depends upon the degree to which it can be relied upon to maintain a fixed value. This fixing of values creates an atmosphere of rigidity, so that when anyone lives surrounded by mechanisms we say that his environment is inhuman. The more scientifically we

plan things the more mechanical they become—necessarily, because science means knowledge and knowledge makes certain what were the uncertain quantities. The efficiency of a West-End flat or a modern business office is a mechanical efficiency—necessarily, because economic necessity requires the elimination of waste, which is inherent in the variable quantity of things in nature. It is to eliminate as far as possible this variable quantity that things are made to operate automatically. Ideally, variation would be impossible.

But it seems rather glib to describe as “inhuman” a condition of things entirely produced by human effort. Natural things are not inhuman, but the mechanisms contrived by the human brain and made by human hands are. Things in a primitive condition are far less likely to be described as “inhuman” than the products of civilisation. A thatched, tumble-down, dimly lighted cottage, without water or sanitation, is not thought of as “inhuman” on the contrary, it is for its human aspect that people cross the Atlantic to see it. The old objection to sky-scrapers was that they were inhuman.

Let us go a little deeper. In what sense do we describe one man as human and another as inhuman? Not simply on the assumption that the one is humane and the other cruel: the terms are of wider reference than that. But while we might spend all day trying to define specifically what we mean by a human being, I think it will be agreed that a certain quality of rigidity is implied by the word inhuman. Complete rectitude will not save a man from the charge of inhumanity, indeed, in so far as his rectitude is perfect it is inhuman. Therefore it must be in this variable element that our humanity lies. A man is distinctively human when his actions betray a living flexibility, a response to the variations of indeterminable feeling, an expansive and not a rigid mould.

But we must go deeper still and observe that we keep as an ultimate meaning for this word "human" something that resists definition, something that is only itself in so far as it escapes the net of scientific determination. To be human a thing must possess a living synthesis of its own which no analysis can break up. It is the life-quality which is the human quality, and what life is, either in essence or in sum, is beyond the range of science.

Mechanism involves the abstraction of the known from the unknown. We abstract what, as we say, "we can find out" from the infinity of phenomena, and we compel what we thus abstract to serve limited purpose. By abstraction we obtain control over the thing abstracted. It ceases to be free, variable and independent in the exercise of wide general law and comes under man's governance and control. Its will is made subservient to his. What will it had of its own (as distinct from the general will determined purely by its organic properties) is annihilated by man in the process of abstraction. The minerals quarried from the earth cease from their own growth and self-determination and are made obedient to man's rigid fiat.

Mechanisation implies the use of such things as will, in large measure, "stay put" once they have been abstracted. That is, their organic properties must be such as can be held in check, ideally these would be completely destroyed. And the organic property, which is disregarded if not destroyed, is of course the living property. So it is that we say that mechanised things are "dead". And now we can understand why we feel a house full of mechanisms is "inhuman". It is because we realise instinctively that it is full of things from which the living element has been abstracted.

Now the pleasure of control—the pleasure we experience in the simplest form of scientific discovery—carries with it inevitably the responsibility for maintaining control. The

responsibility of course rests with those who assume control after discovery has been made, otherwise every scientist would be a mere Pandora. But the maintenance of control is essential, for mechanised things are dependent things: they exist for use and are dependent upon use for beauty. A turbine at work is a thing of wonder and of beauty, but out of control, discarded and thrown on the scrap heap, it is deader than it was before its elements were taken from the earth. Because of this need for redeeming use, the multitude of mechanisms with which we are surrounded may justly be regarded as appealing objects making persistent demands upon us—as things which, because of their inanimation, threaten us with the sense of death unless they are continually dowered with our own life-energy.

This pressing demand made by the mechanisms which surround us compels from us a question of momentous importance. How much of the mechanised utility placed at our disposal by scientific discovery are we able to incorporate in our lives without damage to our distinctive human nature? How much does it divert us from the highest use of our faculties to the business of its own maintenance? How much have we the desire and strength to animate, before it becomes burdensome owing to the appeal which all mechanised things make upon their makers?

So far, our pleasure in obtaining control is quite unbalanced by any comparable sense of responsibility for maintaining control. With marvellous rapidity, scientific invention continues to bring more and more things within the sphere of our control, and since each one serves a purpose of utility, none is rejected, or, upon its intrinsic merits, is to be rejected. Yet if "our life is more than meat, and our body than raiment", how much more is our life than the sum of all the mechanisms devised by man

since the world began? Ultimately, your life and mine is a proportioned thing—a thing to which all *things* are so much lumber unless they serve a purpose beyond things. They only exist for that immaterial purpose called life, and therefore in any wise economy will be rationed according to appetite and increasing purpose. Moreover, he is not necessarily the greatest man who can eat most. When the material activity of conducting life begins to take precedence over the experience of living, then we are beginning to lose our sense of proportion. And if we continue without rectifying this balance, sooner or later we shall have to pay in ennui, in decadence, and ultimately in some comparative return to barbarism, in order to re-establish life values upon the basis of conscious experience which they had formerly attained.

All our mechanisms depend for their validity upon man's conception of the magnitude and grandeur of living. Coach-driving, railway-travelling, flying, are not validated merely by man's power to perform such wonders—they must serve the larger purposes of his distinctive human nature, and man himself alone can provide the criterion by which they are to be judged. They must assist him to exercise, not merely a wider but a finer choice in the pursuits of interest, and this they can only do if his sense of responsibility and power of maintaining control keeps pace with his power of invention.

At present it is a big "if." We are fast coming to the point at which either man will realise the necessity for conscious control over his powers of invention and will place them in subservience to his entire creative life, and thus maintain the balance between the objects of his worship and the contrivances of his skill, or he will so clutter his world with life-devouring mechanisms that he will be driven, in despair of control, to some barbaric simplicity of life.

And by no mere intellectual choice will he decide the issue. It will be decided happily only by a way of life involving deeper consciousness. In a well-appointed house the furniture is such as becomes the needs of its inmates. So it is in the house of life. Not by argument as to the intrinsic merit of any particular form of mechanisation—not by any deliberate weighing of assets shall we decide whether or not we can bear the burden of our scientific intelligence. No, the question is already being decided by the proportion or disproportion we give to our lives to-day. Things exist for our service. The question is do they serve us, or we them? On the answer depends our civilisation. For just in so far as they serve us, utility is the handmaid of beauty, and further beauty will result. But to the degree we serve them, we become the destroyers of our own humanity, and are in the position of endeavouring to gain the whole world at the price of our souls. Life will not accept any excuse for such a bargain. In honesty, she cannot, for, having conceived man as the measure of the universe, she cannot bring forth the barren spawn of “things”.

A NOTE ON WILLIAM BLAKE'S "MARRIAGE OF HEAVEN AND HELL"

IN all great ages, the freedom of the human spirit in the face of destiny engages the thoughts of men. It was the theme of the Greek dramatists, of the Renaissance, of Shakespeare. Indeed, it is the eternal apex of human thought. Whenever the tide of life rises and those manifestations of human energy appear which are recognised as great works of art, we always find that the mainspring of their achievement is the effort of the human mind to think clearly on the subject of Free-will and Destiny.

In the intervening periods men do not think profoundly upon this fundamental problem, but accept the dicta of their forbears and mould their ideas of the use and purpose of human life into conformity with what they consider to be established canons. In such periods the circle of human thought contracts, Destiny becomes fixed, morality takes the place of religious belief, the rigidity of ideas about life expresses itself in the form of law, and this hardening process sometimes goes on until originality of thought upon primary questions becomes so unaccustomed that it is regarded as madness and blasphemy. Of this the life of Christ offers us an apt example.

Now law is the arrangement and governance of human life according to certain accepted principles. But the validity of law depends upon its conformity to those principles. Yet the tendency of law, as of all things, is to become self-dependent, and when law becomes self-dependent, it inevitably departs from the principles to which it owes its validity. Then, lacking the fructification of its life-giving principles, law turns into tyranny.

Man, at his highest, is concerned with the discovery of

those principles upon which law is based at his lowest he is concerned with the imposition of unprincipled laws. And as the discovery of ideal principles is an eternal quest, never wholly to be achieved but ever beckoning the soul of man to more complete understanding, it follows that law ever lags behind the needs of the human spirit, since, being by nature more and more constrictive, law moves in a concentric circle which is in direct opposition to the ever-widening flight of human understanding.

Thus it is that what we call revolution is a recurrent feature of our life, happening in nature as often as spring follows winter, dreadful in its effects when law has become far removed from ideal principles, but beautiful in its manifestations when we are able to see the human spirit rising from the grave, laying aside the linen clothes and displaying its original glory in works that are its true expression.

Free-will and Destiny were the themes that engaged the minds of the men of the great age that came to an end about a century ago. Wordsworth and Coleridge, Rousseau and Voltaire, Goethe and Schiller thought deeply on these things and have left works of art which embody their thoughts. But among the most profound and incisive thinkers of that day was the little-known and less-recognised English engraver, William Blake,

“a poet hidden
In the light of thought,
Singing hymns unbidden
Till the world is wrought
To sympathy with hopes and fears it heeded not”

His chief contribution to the subject was the work of which the foregoing pages are a facsimile, an imaginative credo which Swinburne praised as the greatest of all Blake's works, and upon which he concluded his generous, sincere, but still inadequate criticism by saying:

"It were pleasant enough, but too superfluous, to dwell upon the beauty of this nuptial hymn, to bid men remark what eloquence, what subtlety, what ardour of wisdom, what splendour of thought, is here, how far it outruns, not in daring alone but in sufficiency, all sayings of minor mystics who were not also poets, how much of lofty love and of noble faith underlies and animates these rapid and fervent words, what greatness of spirit and of speech there was in the man who, living as Blake lived, could write as Blake has written "

Blake was an imaginative poet. he thought in images; the theme of Free-will and Destiny therefore presented itself to him in images—the images of Heaven and Hell. Ten or a dozen years before he had completed the work before us, he had given the world what is perhaps its most perfect image of Free-will—*Songs of Innocence*. A little later he followed this with an equally vivid image of man under the shadow of Destiny—the companion book of child-like poems, *Songs of Experience*. About the year 1794 there first appeared the image of his synthesis of the contrary principles—*The Marriage of Heaven and Hell*.

The book is undated, but it was undoubtedly written after the *Songs of Experience*. The *Songs of Innocence* and of *Experience* express Blake's ideas of good and evil as contrary states of the soul, and in many of the *Songs of Experience* (and more particularly in the experimental poems of the Rossetti MS. which, as Mr Joseph Wicksteed has pointed out, are Blake's rejected versions of the *Songs of Experience*) there is the bitterness and resentment we all experience in our first discovery of evil and its workings. When Blake came to write *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* this resentment had been transmuted by understanding. Now he understood that evil was not a condition imposed by some malevolent deity, but was a state of experience through which the soul of man passed, in order that, knowing good and evil, he might achieve a nobler state—

one in which good and evil were surpassed—the condition Blake called Imagination, or Liberty. Hence we find that, while most of the *Songs of Experience* seem to have been written under the cloud that covers us when we see man as the child of Time, the sport of Circumstance, the victim of Fate, when we come to *The Marriage* the sky has cleared, the child is upon the cloud again as he was in the opening song of Innocence, or rather now perhaps above it, flying in the pure sun-illumined ether. Blake has recovered happiness: the laughter of a man has superseded the smiles and tears of the child. Blake himself has embraced the fire of experience (like the Angel on page 24), has been consumed as its victim and arisen as the prophet of Imagination.

The only date to *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* that really matters may therefore be decided by this note of triumph. For it tells us that Blake has accepted Destiny. Henceforth his joy is in the conflict, neither weakly and cravenly cowering beneath the shadow of Fate, nor vainly and pitifully defying the figure of Omnipotence, but rejoicing in the "mental fight" which labours to "build Jerusalem." When a man has discovered the purpose of pain he has won the first victory of life.

Thus, with a variety of examples, *The Marriage* states the problem of dualism. Dualism is an inherent problem, unperceived prior to self-consciousness and thereafter never in this life entirely solved save in action. War, philosophy, and religion are among man's efforts to solve the problem, efforts whose success is inevitably partial because in them consciousness is never wholly vitalised. But in art, as in the greatest moments of love, the human spirit becomes wholly incarnate: the purpose of Destiny and the desire of Free-will are, for a moment, synthesised, the contraries are married and the problem of dualism is solved. But only for a moment, an immortal moment which art perpetuates,

such a moment as Blake himself had in mind when he wrote, "O that men would seek immortal moments! O that men would converse with God!" In art, and in the moments of consciousness which produce art, there is perfect harmony of spirit with matter, and that imperishable beauty is born which is the offspring of the marriage of Heaven and Hell.

This condition of unity, harmony, and freedom from strife is man's most constant desire, yet his mortal life is conditioned by dualism, dissonance and conflict.

A moment's consideration will convince us that anything else is unthinkable. "Attraction and repulsion, reason and energy, love and hate are", as Blake says, "necessary to human existence". Take from us our conceptions of black and white, night and day, good and evil, riches and poverty, war and peace, and the mind flounders in formlessness, quickly to become a void. Which is to say that life is so wedded to progression that anything like permanently static conditions are to the human mind wholly inconceivable. Therefore religion divorced from social action becomes a metaphysic, philosophy a discussion about words, and war, pursued to its logical conclusion, passes from a trial of strength to a policy of extirpation. Only art, which is a marriage of the contrary principles, achieves a synthesis.

The philosophic Swedenborg had wandered off into the world of metaphysics, and Blake had followed him until he perceived whither he was being led. In *The Marriage* he brings Swedenborg to earth with a bump. He restates the problem of dualism. Swedenborg had announced that a new heaven was begun. Well and good, Blake seems to say; that it may take form and exhibit itself in perfection "the Eternal Hell revives". Swedenborg had embalmed the body of truth and laid it in a sepulchre, wrapping it in the folds of his own writings. But the tomb is empty, the linen clothes are folded up. Esau, the outcast, comes into

dominion, for when religion is sterile “active evil is better than passive good”

The book, like all true works of art, is a product of its age and reflects in many details the time which brought it to birth. Men of genius are barometers of their times; but whereas the generality of men are responsive only in their external behaviour to the temperature and condition of their days, genius responds with an intensity which goes to the heart of human experience and gives forth a response that is universal and timeless in its application. Exactly what Swedenborg taught is no great matter to most people now, but Swedenborg as the image of the idealist, weaving out of the threads of his aspiration a passionless and static heaven and being compelled to turn a blind eye to the implications of predestination, is an eternal type that persists in all ages. The reverberations of the French Revolution have long since passed away, but the considerations it suggested to the mind of Blake are such as will concern us as long as good and evil or night and day continue. The altar to the Goddess of Reason has long since been removed from the church where it was set up in France, but the pride of man in his scientific evidences, and the elevation of these evidences to the position once held by Delphic oracles, remain. Events change, their causes recur. “A poem is the very image of life expressed in its eternal truth”

The Marriage of Heaven and Hell is rooted in indignation. That may seem at first an unprofitable soil in which to plant a great idea, but there are noble precedents for thinking it the best of all. If we cast our minds back to the sayings of an earlier prophet, we hear the same tones of indignation in the words, “Woe unto you, Scribes, Pharisees, hypocrites!” When the life-giving virtue has gone out of the tree, fire is needed to burn it. When virtue has become a pall to cover the dead, living men will rise and rend it

Blake saw what Jesus saw the religious men of his day arrogating to themselves the grace of God, the irreligious exiled and cast out as those predestined to damnation. From the immediate damnation of hanging Blake saved such a one (Tom Paine, author of *The Rights of Man*) in September 1792, and his indignation with the bishop who set himself the task of showing Paine his wickedness is to be seen in almost every one of Blake's annotations to the bishop's tract

"Who does the Bishop call Bad Men? Are they the Publicans and Sinners that Christ loved to associate with? Does God Love the Righteous according to the Gospel, or does he not cast them off?"

Virtue entrenched behind the bastions of law and order did not appear to the honesty-loving mind of William Blake as the same quality as that which evidenced itself in the person of the prophet who was taken prisoner at Gethsemane. If this sharp-shooting, sniping, head-hunting propensity was to be called "good", what name befitted an activity that was creative and ready at all times fearlessly to expose itself? "Evil" it seemed. So be it, argued Blake. Though the rôles of wolf and lamb are exchanged, their natures are not altered.

"Once meek, and in a perilous path
The just man kept his course along
The vale of death
Now the sneaking serpent walks
In mild humility,
And the just man rages in the wilds
Where lions roam."

The way of the cross has become a primrose path adorned with vestments, hence the creative work of bringing life to barren places must be sought elsewhere. Driven out with disgust, the seeker after truth will seek it rather among the wild beasts of instinct than among the fat hirelings of religion. Moreover, there is thunder in the air, and when

the storm breaks the sneaking serpent will need to seek shelter from the rain

His indignation confessed, Blake laughed. He could not do otherwise. Self-conscious virtue, do what it will, remains a figure of fun, and equally with his passionate indignation Blake's laughter has given immortality to this work. Satire is malicious unless it helps to restore proportion, but it is a noble servant of truth—a king's own fool, as Shakespeare knew—when by isolation it shows pretence to be devoid of everything that becomes a man. So the Angel is dragged round the Universe and riddled with conundrums, till, out of sheer admiration for creative energy, he forswears the pontifical and assumes the prophetic rôle. Blake's laughter is that born of strong assurance. It is the “firm persuasion” that removes mountains of folly. It arises from a faith and confidence in human nature which accepts and delights in the whole man, seeing in him, and not in his emasculated effigy, the image of the divine.

This note makes no pretence to offer more than the sketchiest guidance to the wealth of meaning contained in this book. Even were he aware of the sum of that wealth (which he certainly is not), the writer would not attempt to convert Blake's gold into the coinage of prosaic exposition. All that has been attempted may be regarded as a hint to budding prospectors, and this he would not conclude without a word of warning.

Blake is often the most humiliating of authors. If we approach him objectively and call upon him to hand over his meaning in response to our ordinary intelligent interest, he seems to be the very soul of evasion. Here and there amazingly bright ideas shine out now and again some particularly forceful aphorism fairly takes the breath away, but this clarity only serves to show up what appears to be the Cimmerian darkness of his work as a whole, and,

thwarted thus, we turn away from it, to salve our intellectual self-respect with such words as "mystic", "symbolic", "fantastical". And certainly, in response to the ordinary rude, stand-and-deliver demand of common-sense intelligence, Blake is the most elusive will-o'-the-wisp in literature, for the farther he is pursued along the line of deductive reasoning, the farther he leads the misguided reader into the bog of complexity and abstraction, till finally the unhappy victim finds himself saddled with some system of symbolism which has as little relevance to the true meaning of Blake as the Bacon controversy has to the enjoyment of Shakespeare.

Experience of this kind has probably occurred to every reader of Blake at one time or another, indeed, it is the almost invariable first effect. But there is another, and this other experience is alone sufficient to account for the perennial and ever-increasing interest he inspires.

Some happy turn of circumstance has made the reader's mind susceptible and sensitive perhaps some soul-illuminating event has occurred in his own experience. He opens one of Blake's books prepared to receive imaginative suggestions concerning truths of which he is already dimly aware. He looks at the designs, not as representations of fact, but as imaginative records of spiritual events. And lo and behold! every page dances with meaning. He is suddenly transported into a world vivid with understanding. obscurity melts away like morning mist, profound truths loom up on the horizon, undreamt-of unity appears, and what he sees he sees so clearly that his former bewilderment is incredible. It is indeed as if a film had fallen from his eyes. The "muddy vesture of decay" is for a moment shed, and the harmony of an immortal soul has become audible.

Blake's progress (unlike the Rake's) is from the known to the unknown. from the immediate facts of childish percep-

tion—the blossom, the lamb, the shepherd, the cradle, the village green—to the music of the spheres. He moves by imperceptible degrees through the veils of sense to matters of pure spiritual perception. Such movement defines the sublime. If we cannot follow him, let us at least abstain from deriding his bald head. Sympathy, intelligence and imagination will carry us in his wake far enough for delight, and those who adventure for themselves upon this journey may be assured that they will find as they go some of those things in Heaven and Earth which were beyond Horatio's philosophy.

WILLIAM BLAKE AND THE IMAGINATION OF TRUTH

THOSE who regard man rationally adjusted to his environment as the highest kind of man must hold in disesteem those of his activities which have been practised in defiance of his personal comfort and well-being, those, namely, which have proved of highest interest to the race. Thus, absence of conflict is a negation with no intrinsic significance—it may be the Nirvana of the saint, or the condition of death, but we ought to realise that these conditions are diametrically opposed, the one being a state wherein the soul glows with life-giving heat to the point of incandescence, the other being characterised by entire absence of warmth. An essay of Freud's on man's inherent desire for rest shows that he is totally unaware of any difference between these conditions. Fire and ice are not more different.

Quite half the current confusion of thought is due to a lack of terms which would readily enable us to distinguish between states of inertia and activity. At present, the man who wants spiritual peace at any price is constantly persuading himself that his attitude to essentials is the same as his to whom life itself is the opportunity for spiritual conflict. He who will accept almost any "truth" provided it is presented to him in some rational form of dogma is confounded with him to whom nothing is true that he has not experienced. This is all the more maddening because extremes meet and both parties desire exclusive rights to the same terms. But since their real objects are opposed, wisdom will teach those in whom life is active to concede to the party for whom static values are the only ones esteemed, every symbol of tradition, no matter what its value, that may be mistaken for its dead opposite.

Negatively this is what the poets of every generation have done. They have discarded the aids of tradition in the belief that truth is not mediable through any sort of intellectual formula, no matter how exquisite, but is discoverable, by immediate perception, in eternally new forms of beauty. Their fidelity to individual experience has been such that they have sought for truth, not as a possession but as a bride, believing that Truth herself also seeks those who lay open the remotest crannies of the soul for her reception. To the Jew of the first Christian century, as of course to the orthodox Jew of to-day, the distinctive quality of Jesus was his defiance of the sacred Law. He himself claimed to be its incarnation. That is what the poet always knows himself to be, indeed it is this *self-devotion*—this readiness to be a stage whereon the powers of life may play their parts—that characterises the poet. Was Shakespeare a Christian, and if not, was it a humility born of his understanding of life which prevented him from making any such claim? How far did Milton cripple his genius by the pride of his attempt to walk on the elevating stilts of religious tradition? Remembering orthodox ideas of deity a century ago, how great is our debt to Shelley for his confession of atheism? And in view of the welter of cross-currents offered by the world's religions of to-day, we might even be thankful for the example of William Blake when he said to himself, "I must create a system or be enslaved by another man's", and, "I will not reason and compare my business is to create".

"Facts", said Tristram Shandy, "may be learned by rote, but truth not". As truly as Eve is fabled to have done, we are paying the price of facts. Our fierce concentration upon them has, during the past hundred years, dulled our capacity for perceptive consciousness. We have accepted the dictation of facts as a substitute for the realisation of truth. We have dissolved the sense of beauty in a test-tube

of fact until we are all tinged with the pride of the man who, knowing how the colours of the sunset were formed, found it waste of time to observe them. The very terms, truth and fact, are used interchangeably. And it is because of the confusion thus created—because the Eden of the soul is a neglected garden—that conformity to environment can be offered as a human objective. To the most ruinous confusion of thought we speak of scientific truth, religious truth, poetic truth, biological truth, and what not. For the most part we speak of “truth” when we mean the comparatively inaccurate record which the senses make of external objects, thus degrading a word which should signify a life-giving experience of relationship with the highest objects of contemplation. How can conceptions so essentially different be called by the same name without far-reaching confusion? The confusion is here. It has come about by calling truth facts and facts truth, and its sponsors are the Priest and the Scientist.

Inertia has a natural desire to claim the privileges of movement. Both those who worship facts and those who have faith in dogma believe they have claims on truth. But “truth is a bird on the wing” and it matters not if we shoot and dissect it, after the manner of science, or whether we create an image of the bird which shall be Very Bird of Very Birds, not thus shall we come to a realisation of its joyous life. This we can only do by the power of the imagination. That “living intensity” of which Shelley spoke is not an adjunct but *the essence* of truth. It is the white heat of consciousness in which subject and object are interchangeable and, as Blake said, “we become what we behold.” This moment of vision is the spring and source of all religion. Religion does not wait upon the evidences of the senses—least of all upon the rationalising power. It is the living consciousness of man’s relationship to things beyond his sense perceptions. Wherever man’s attitude

to life is truly imaginative there it is religious, there he worships, there he perceives the truth, there the self and the not-self are merged in creative unity

Not until we rid ourselves of the last shreds of the religion of materialism can our lives become really religious. God exists in truth, but He is not a fact. All the wars of religion were actually due to competitive ideas of deity and contentions about the comparative merits of these creations of materialism. It is not *what* a man worships that makes him religious, but *how* he worships. To think otherwise is to arrogate truth, to depreciate the piety of the dead and the different, to think ourselves—"with confident insolence, sprouting from systematic reasoning"—what Blake in *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* called Angels.

It may be objected that such an attitude implies a purely subjective philosophy, but not by those who have thought deeply on the nature of consciousness. Consciousness necessarily annihilates the material existence of every object by transferring it from the world without to the world within, but so far from thereby making the object purely subjective, it is only by this removal of the image from the realm of intellectual concept to the wide and wholly individual chamber of consciousness that its objective reality can be truly perceived. "All things", said Blake, "are comprehended in their Eternal Forms in the divine body of the Saviour, the True Vine of Eternity, the Human Imagination." In saying that nothing exists apart from consciousness the mystic asserts his belief in the absolute reality of the spiritual world, and his statement is the contrary of one that would elevate him to the place of creative godhead. Blake's previous sentence in the same paragraph makes this clear. "There exist", he says, "in the Eternal World the Permanent Realities of Every Thing we see reflected in this Vegetable Glass of Nature." The imagination is thus the power whereby we are able to

realise the world of reality, and it was because Blake genuinely understood this that he claimed for the imagination precedence and power over every other faculty of man, making it the core of his philosophy and identifying the central figure of Christianity with the imagination as the symbol of mediation between God and man

But it was of course by no mere act of intellectual credulity that Blake realised a world of reality in the realm of consciousness. That great and decisive mystical experience which he suffered and enjoyed at the death of his brother Robert is the key to all Blake's religious thought. It was in the strength of that experience that he wrote and drew *The Gates of Paradise*, which contains the lines:

"But when once I did descry
The Immortal Man that cannot die "

and the *Tractates upon Religion* wherein he laid down this fundamental principle

"Man's Perceptions are not bounded by Organs of Perception he perceives more than sense (tho' ever so acute) can discover "

And having thus realised consciousness to be the integral unit of individuality he discovered imagination to be the nucleating power by which each of us creates an intelligible universe for himself

To Blake's thought there were four degrees of perception, each a rarefication of the one that preceded it. First came single vision, or pure sensation, the sight of objects which man shares with the animals. When reason, or the capacity for rationalisation, was added, the result was twofold vision, intellectual understanding, or what is now described as pure scientific thought. When to this was added sentience, threefold vision resulted, and this is the sight of the poet confined to the physical world, the poet of whom Burns is perhaps the supreme type, the human

creature perfectly responsive to sense impressions and capable of harmonious intellectual co-ordination of them, but lacking in the power to perceive images of truth that are essentially independent of the senses. Last in Blake's order of illumination came pure consciousness, or the power to perceive spiritual reality, and this he described as fourfold vision. What is most significant in his conception is the ascending and inclusive nature of the succeeding states of vision. But once Blake achieved the idea of pure consciousness he counted the physical world well lost for the excellence of the spiritual world which vision made real to him.

Blake is distinctive, too, in his confession that every stage of his progress was made by the exercise of the imagination. This will attract or repel wholly as we appraise that "shaping spirit." It will certainly repel those who confound imagination with fancy, for fancy lives with pleasure and is a purely subjective exercise of the childish imagination that waits its incarnation in the world of experience to be worthy of the name of imagination; just as phantasy, which is fancy's counterpart, is a purely subjective projection of pain. These are the sports of delusion which of course prey upon the true imagination, but vital experience transferred to the realm of consciousness is the only true stuff of imagination. Fancy is romantic, imagination is real. Properly regarded, imagination is the power that bodies forth the perceptions of consciousness, which perceptions have themselves been brought to that centre of reality by the power that re-creates them. Imagination is the synthetic power that reaps the harvest of experience and converts its grain into the bread of understanding which is shared by the fellowship of art. Imagination is the power whereby the selfhood of the individual is transcended and the communion of saints is made possible. Imagination is the power which makes

the forgiveness of sins inevitable When it is esteemed as the first principle of religion the walls of dogma will have heard the trumpets of Joshua, and perhaps the psychology of Canaan (or the world of environment) will become aware of its insufficiency.

LYRICAL AND DRAMATIC

THERE'S none so young but he retains the memory of a time when, suddenly perceiving a truth, he told his secret before reason had provided him with the armour to defend that truth against its corresponding combatant error. It was a sad experience. He blabbed, and error, being always armed, caught him and made such havoc with his ready-made defence that the fight was carried on right into the perceptive chambers of the mind, until he began to doubt what should never be doubted—an intuition. It is thus that truth is often overcome and remains bound and powerless until some happy experience calls forth the necessary defensive reason and truth again comes into its own.

To have the intuitions of one's youth established by reason and confirmed by experience is a fine compensation for increasing years. Life is worth living if it confirms our young and deep convictions, and it nearly always does this if we are patient and sincere and do not substitute poor makeshifts for those convictions we cannot at the moment fortify with reason. It is pardonable to hold a conviction in suspense because of the weight of evidence against it, but to abandon a belief that was a source of inspiration is to suffer self-mutilation. Wounds heal, but limbs do not grow again, and the smallest vision is a limb for which no substitute can be found.

Let youth retain its vision: age will but confirm it.

Many years ago I discovered the delight of poetry. It became a passion so great I could not resist the temptation to declaim it to the solitude of my own room. And in doing so of course I found that poetry gained by being spoken aloud. The speaking human voice, I argued, was

intended to be the instrument of beautiful sound. It seemed unreasonable that it should be silenced before its highest opportunities, and I could think of no valid reason why poetry should be confined to the covers of a book. Soundless poetry was an abstraction, due no doubt to the swing of the pendulum from rhetoric, and though rhetoric was a pretence, I did not hate it as I hated—and still hate—an abstraction. In my innocence I believed that people had only to hear great verse articulated according to the rules of its composition and spoken with dignity and delight, and they would instantly recognise the voice of the human soul. I believed that poetry was the voice of the soul speaking more clearly and with greater intimacy than is possible to music or the plastic arts. Though I now know that false art has vitiated the taste of many, so that they like cleverness where they would normally have loved beauty, I still believe that poetry is a convincing voice to any simple and sincere mind.

But it was my own pleasure and no argument that brought to my imagination a theatre where what I was pleased to call Lyrical Drama would be presented. I say "presented" and not acted, because the drama I imagined moved too deeply in the souls of the protagonists ever to be "acted" in the ordinary meaning of that word. I imagined a theatre that would provide a feast for the soul deeper and more nourishing even than that provided by the plays of Shakespeare.

I was insufficiently educated to have any theories. I loved the spoken word, and because it had been the spoken word of lyrical poetry which had stirred my imagination, I believed that nothing else would suffice for the rock on which this theatre was to be built.

The next step was to find the people who shared something of my belief, since among them, and among them only, could I hope to find those who might speak verse

adequately. So with pains quite incommensurate with the result, I wrote a pamphlet. The printer christened it "Poetic Recitals", and I remember how readily I conceded my own title, *Readings of Verse*, to his abomination, thinking that if a dog were thoroughbred it didn't matter what name you gave him. The pamphlet declared that poetry was not a complete art until it was heard, that the methods of recitation suitable for doggerel and poor verse were quite unsuitable when used for poetry, that impersonation in the delivery of lyrical poetry was ridiculous, and that therefore, since poetry was written to be heard, means should be devised whereby the speaker's personal appearance should be hidden while he was speaking the highest forms of lyrical poetry. Perhaps my idea was a reaction to maternal advice oft given, but I believed that poetry should be heard and not seen. At that time I did not even know that masks had ever been used for the drama.

Like a brave hot-gospeller I next posted the pamphlet to everybody in the world of literature whose name and address I could find in a year-book. I do not recommend this method of attack to any young person with a similar mission, because (I say it without malice) many people whose names appear in a literary year-book are more interested in a Stock Exchange price-list than in poetry. All the same, I received a number of interesting letters, and I still think it strange that they came from those whose opinions I had most reason to respect. I remember as one result of this propaganda being invited by a poet of repute to meet a company of his friends and expound my views. I was young and shy and could only have spoken freely upon a subject about which I was indifferent. Judge then of my double dumbness when confronted by the makers of what I most admired, grave men of twice and three times my years, any one of whom could most easily have filled a number of *The Quarterly* with his opinions upon

the relation of poetry to drama. Never, I imagine, has tiny craft sailed a straighter course into high rocks and disappeared into the water more silently!

I should probably have forgotten that evening but for the fact that I came away with a rather fantastical young man who was shortly to give me all the reassurance I wanted to support my convictions. For not long afterwards a performance of one of the Greek plays was given in London, and it was at that exhibition (it was indeed an exhibition, for the scenery, the dresses, the lighting and most of all the realistic acting, were exhibitively to a degree) that the fantastical young man, playing the part of the messenger, tore passion to tatters, bit the dust, made his body a contortion and his voice almost a vehicle of expectoration in the vain effort to get "live drama" out of a Greek play.

After that I hired a hall and experimented with speakers and curtains and lighting devices, trying at the same time to find those rare persons who had not only the physical endowment but those other and still rarer qualities that make the speaking of poetry a high interpretative art trying also to discover a device that would lull all the senses save hearing and yet itself be unnoticeable. Ridiculous, amusing, interesting and memorable those evenings were by turns; but after I suppose a dozen of them the effort petered out.

It petered out because I could not find time to make a centre for both research and training. It petered out because one morning I awoke to find an enterprising gentleman actually stealing my poor thunder, but with the efficiency of a publicity agent and for purposes which may be guessed but were not then apparent. It petered out chiefly because about that time I began to grope in the fog of "dramatic" and "non-dramatic", and dallied with the heresy that poetry and drama were different in substance.

I could not continue while I was uncertain whether recitals of verse might lead to the drama of my imagination, or must inevitably end in a blind alley because poetry and drama had no innate connection

I was told that poetry was one thing and drama another that a play might be very fine poetry but very poor drama that action was the essence of drama and that unless the words advanced the action they were redundancies and should be cut that lyrical poetry was by its nature undramatic, and that wherever a poetical drama showed lyrical tendency, the poet had lost his sense of the unities I was told all that and a lot else I have happily forgotten, because it is all heresy

For many years I lived under the shadow of that heresy. The other day it was suddenly dispelled and I discovered, with the surprise that always marks conviction, that all dramatic energy comes from the lyric source Lyrical and dramatic are no more to be divided than the sea from the waves on its surface Unless the lyric moves in the circle of song (in which case it gradually loses the limitations of speech until it becomes pure sound and is merged in the music of pure sound) it cannot continue its course for long without becoming dramatic What is called inspiration, that which knits the whole personality to the experience of intuitive perception, or vision, is the source from which all drama proceeds. At its birth it is always lyrical

God sang, and man was born, purely lyrical. God continued to sing and Eve took form out of Adam, and so the drama of this planet began The creation of every work of art is exactly after that model

Lyric is one Add one, or lyric again, and the answer is two, or drama This is not believed because it is simple and at the same time very difficult to do Modern drama is overcome with the miracle of one and one and will have it that one must be added to something utterly unlike itself

for the production of anything so unlike "one" as "two". Consequently the modern dramatist begins at the end of his book of arithmetic, and after trying his hand at binomial theorem, the result is staged. It is usually, and very naturally, quite free from lyrical tendency.

There are heretics who believe that the Devil was self-begotten. They deny that all things were made by God and "without Him was not anything made that was made", for they say that if that were so, the world had remained lyrical. Milton, the lyric and dramatic poet, knew better. He showed the Devil to be God's dramatic masterpiece. The people who believe that lyrical poetry and drama are different in substance are lost in the fog of that heresy. They short-circuit the drama, with horrid results.

Some time ago an English author, then writing poeticised drama for the stage, said: "It has been too often assumed that it is the manager who bars the way to poetic plays. But it is much more probable that the poets have failed the managers. If poets mean to serve the stage, their dramas must be dramatic." He could not have voiced the heresy more clearly. Poetry is a sheep and must go about in wolf's clothing if the manager is not to kill it.

Do poets "mean to serve the stage"? Not in that servile manner, I hope. For if ever the stage is to recover spiritual significance (and without that significance not even true comedy is possible) the stage must serve the poet as humbly and meticulously as the Tabernacle of the Israelites served the Ark of the Covenant in the wilderness. To speak of the poet serving the stage is to invert creative order, and that way lies chaos. The poet is the dramatic creator, and if he be called prose dramatist, then prose dramatist is only poet writ small. There is not one law for the poet and another for the playwright, neither is there one law for the poet and another for that uncreative piece of convenience—the stage. What is this stage that

the poet must "serve"? Who made it? And for what purpose? And pray when did boards and footlights find their sentient soul to which the poet must be obedient? If the householder who "serves" the house is a fool and a slave, how much more the poet who serves that which he should shape entirely to his own convenience? Even if this stage be made to include the manager, the producer, the scene-painter, the lime-lighter and God knows what other servants, there is still one law and one giver of the law. By no manner of jugglery, nor sinful waste of good temper can there ever come to be a committee of all these servants tied together so that they may appear as one man and endowed with the power to produce a work of art. Let the humblest poet, the lowliest playwright lift up his head. He is master of all he has strength to lay hands on. His rank is fixed. The Muses have given him divine right. Let him stand the stage on its head if it suits his purpose. Better still, let him abandon it and make one after his own heart's desire.

At its inception drama is always lyrical. All works of art begin to be made in the same way. When subjective feeling and objective recognition meet and mate, their nuptials are hymned by lyric song. The children of that marriage may be as many as the inhabitants of the earth, with as many names, characters and wills of their own, but they are all children of one parent and apart from that creative experience whose immediate expression is lyric song, not one of them had come to life. The characters of a true drama are all children of one parent. At its inception every play is a purely family affair, and though the generations that follow beget every diversity of individual, common parentage must be acknowledged because that is the only true unity. In lyrical drama we are near the parent stock and the likeness will be easily recognised, but even in the most realistic drama, truly composed,

common parentage will yet be acknowledged. Only in bastard works of art, where foundlings are picked up and herded together, will this unity be destroyed.

The lyrical is the spiritual voice. This same voice coming into touch with environment becomes dramatic, it is merely a question of proximity to the source. That which was lyrical becomes dramatic as it expends its force. Lyric is cause, drama, effect. All the attention in drama now is riveted on the effect, the cause is forgotten, it is even unknown. This process of decay comes inevitably to every art form when the fruit is required but the soil out of which the tree grows is neglected.

A new form must be made, a new tree must be grown. If true drama is to be revived, dramatists must get back to the cause, back beyond dramatic happenings to the lyric source from which they proceed. It is perfectly useless for the modern playwright to imagine that by speaking as it were through his nose, or by ventriloquial means, his voice will be dramatic. The street orator can show him a surer method.

Mr Shaw has understood this. Endowed with all the natural gifts of the street orator, he has put his talents to excellent account. He understands that if you care passionately about anything your speech will very soon become dramatic. Mr Shaw's passions are intellectual, ascetic, moral, social and philanthropic. The one quality they lack is any profound spiritual significance*. The lack of this quality in modern drama Mr Shaw himself points out in the searching criticism of his preface to *Back to Methuselah*, which is one of the finest things he has ever written. But unfortunately the play that follows is as good an illustration as can be found of the spiritual inadequacy of modern drama both in form and content. The spiritual themes of *Methuselah* fall with deadly automatic

* When this was written *St Joan* had not appeared. (Ed.)

insistence to the level of a debating club because, quite apart from any inherent poverty, it is impossible to present spiritual ideas in an intellectually argumentative form. Spiritual truth cannot be proved—it can only be demonstrated. To argue about spiritual truth is to go for ever “about it and about.” When the finest social critic turned creator, his first need was to destroy his old weapons. Alas! in all his old and shining armour Mr Shaw sallied forth to the conquest of Adam and Eve. Those heroic figures, big with poetic meaning to the merest child, have only to be seen through a single verse from the Book of Genesis for Mr Shaw’s grotesques to appear indecently devoid of their only *raison d’être*—spiritual significance. The censor did well to insist upon a covering for their nakedness. Naked walking minds are not a pleasant sight. They need the divine body, or spiritual form, which is poetry.

All art is primarily spiritual perception. If it be true that the spiritual is the lyrical voice, then that which is most purely spiritual will be most lyrical. However far we go from the spiritual source, the lyric impulse remains the deep out of which the countless waves of drama must proceed, ever spending their force as they break upon the shore. True drama, whether in tragedy or comedy, is the drama of the soul. Drama that is not lyrical in essence is not the drama of the soul. For though the soul must find expression, first in words, then in action, the cause lies deeper than either, and the cause is revealed in the lyric cry of recognition. Thence proceed all things: the full revelation of the vision within the soul, the power working on within the soul until it foreshadows the event, the heralding of that event by imaginative speech which creates the essential sympathy in the mind of the hearer, and finally—finally, fulfilment and death in action.

Action is the death of the drama. However paradoxical

that may sound, it is demonstrably true. Beyond Lear's "Pray you undo this button", nothing is possible. The power is exhausted in action, indeed the action itself is exhausted. Action is the working out of lyrical impulse in terms of mortality, the expression of spiritual power in the terms of sense. In action the force expends itself. When the force is spent, action is complete, the circle is rounded.

That, surely, is the explanation of a Greek play. The Greeks, knowing that the attitude of spiritual perception was necessary to the appreciation of sublime themes, made their plays in the forms most likely to arouse that perception. They knew that lyrical expression was the proper medium for spiritual truth, and as a natural consequence three parts of a Greek play is purely lyrical. They believed that when the spiritual atmosphere became sufficiently charged, action would result and bring the play to an end, but quite reasonably, this action was what they were least concerned about. All their efforts were directed towards the task of revealing spiritual forces in their protagonists and lyrical poetry is the only adequate medium for such a task. The presentation of events for such an object would have destroyed the spiritual chronology, but when they had fully presented the conflicting conditions of soul, the event happened. The inevitable event was the least important part of the play. They would not even allow it to disturb the spiritual atmosphere by showing the event on the stage. It was relegated to the mouth of the messenger who told it as a tale.

The trouble with the modern drama is that we have reversed this order of construction. We present the event and leave the cause to be deduced. Take an example. The Greeks would have conceded drama to the trial of a man for his life. They would have been most concerned to show the spiritual states of the accused and his accusers, and a messenger would have narrated the finding of the

jury and the sentence of the judge. There the play would have ended. But the same theme according to modern treatment begins with the representation of events at the scaffold, as for instance in Mr Somerset Maugham's play, *The Letter*.

Shakespeare, of course, had both trial and scaffold, yet there is not a play of Shakespeare's that does not openly confess its lyric origin, returning to the lyric form constantly as to the source of spiritual being. Take from even *Macbeth*—a climacteric play in the history of drama—the lyrical choruses of the witches, the soliloquies and reveries of *Macbeth* and *Lady Macbeth*, and what remains? A sordid tale of murders by a Scottish barbarian. But if a modern poet were to offer his *Macbeth* to a West London theatre it is *just those* choruses, soliloquies and reveries that he would be required to cut. Shakespeare's lyrical tendency is naturally his offence in the eyes of the modern stage. Concessions are still made and Hamlet is allowed most of his soliloquies, but the cinema treads on our heels and *Chu Chin Chow* has, I believe, no soliloquies.

What does it all mean? It means that modern drama has become a superficial entertainment comparable with the exhibitions of the cinematograph with which it unsuccessfully competes. Practically all modern plays are constructed on the Shakespearean model, only with this difference: in our frantic efforts to be more "dramatic" than Shakespeare, all spiritual significance has disappeared.

"The weak lay hands on what the strong has done
Till that be tumbled that was lifted high."

The lyric strain is nowhere heard. The living form is worn to the bare bones. The bones are rattled and we call the rattling drama. It is time to bury them. It is time to forget Shakespeare, forget the stage, forget the Greeks, forget even the Church, and start afresh.

I sometimes wonder whether the Church retains the form of its service solely for the purpose of bearing witness against the stage. For every Sunday, lyrical drama, abhorrent even in name to the average playgoer, is still attended by patient multitudes. They are unaware of the supreme irony, that although the form of drama they bless upon the first day of the week is one which they would curse on any of the remaining six, only its superb form keeps the drama of the Church from decay and disuse. Its form is a beautiful example of lyrical drama. And though it be but mouldering stone, what a magnificent monument it makes! What an indictment of the jazz-band vertiginous drama! The singing of the *Magnificat* by a village choir is a more truly dramatic performance than any exhibitive play of the modern stage. Why? Because, having spiritual significance, it makes the primary acknowledgment to lyrical impulse and moves us with beauty of form which mechanised vitality is powerless to achieve.

The spectacular exhibition, the sensational effect, the arguments, the badinage, the trap-door entrances and exits, the coincidence of physical bodies, the elaborately arranged surprises and climaxes which are all part of the stock-in-trade of the modern mechanical play, have essentially no more of true drama in them than a railway accident. We suffer them for want of something better. I believe that "something better" can be fashioned out of our appreciation of poetry when we have full assurance of faith that poetry and drama are of the same stuff. What we have to be rid of is our suspicion of lyrical impulse. At present, no sooner has a poet begun to write upon a theme that would dramatise itself if continued in, than he pulls himself up, and in a falsely humble desire to "serve the stage", begins to wonder whether what he has written is sufficiently "dramatic".

The Muses do not like that kind of questioning. They

leave him to his tinkering and he patches the whole thing up with artifice. Is it a wonder that we are bored by such "poetic" plays? They fall between two stools, between inspiration and pure mechanism, being neither spiritually nor mechanically dramatic. They but confirm us in the old heresy that poetry and drama are natural enemies. But let the lyrical origin of drama be acknowledged, let the lyric form be maintained just so long as it has purpose and significance, and chatter about "advancing the action" will cease. Indeed, the effort of the dramatist will again be towards the elimination of unmeaning movement. When that happens we shall perhaps see the spiritual drama, now moribund in the Church, unfold itself with a dignity and intensity that touches the sublime.

THE SIGNIFICANCE OF D H LAWRENCE

THERE are times when the conspiracy of events would persuade us that everything which happens to us is perfectly designed. Unconsciously looking for a point that would focus wandering and detached thoughts upon the work of the late D H Lawrence, there chanced to come into our hands, almost simultaneously, three pamphlets treating of sex and society. And suddenly the phenomenon of Lawrence appeared like a deliberate chess move on the part of the gods. The relevance of what he had to say became immediate, as if dictated by oracles who spoke through him words of intense and momentous application. Suddenly the insistence upon naturalism, which had seemed partial, and the bitter reiteration against "the dirty little secret", which had sounded shrill, were like the notes of a bugle rallying the present generation to the standard of individually responsible religious life. The indictment of "cerebral emotions" was no longer extravagant, the bald statement "we've made a great mess of love" appeared to be the simple truth, and the grave announcement, "sex is a state of grace", was like a benediction by a priest after a new order.

The mechanisation of society, which has been going on with increasing rapidity for the past hundred years, has latterly been moving in a vortex round the centre of life itself. Once the passion for the scientific method became an obsession to the mind, and persuaded men everywhere that truth was discoverable by way of analysis, then the practical application of this method to all discovery followed inevitably. Poetry, philosophy, religion, all found themselves speaking to deaf audiences. There was believed to

be a surer method of knowing than these could ever show. Logically and reasonably, their voices sounded comparatively unimportant. But reason moves in a circle, as Blake very clearly understood, and if it continues to move unguided by creative imagination it quickly makes a vortex, whose tendency is of course to gyrate towards the centre. We are now at the last stages of its movement towards this point. The age that destroyed the honest word "maker" and substituted for it the lying word "manufacturer", so that we stand frightened, hungry, and unemployed before the inventions of industrial mechanism—the age that has given us mechanical government, mechanical war, mechanical transit, mechanical speech, music and picture-making has also taught us the mechanism of the psyche, or the science of love. And the dismal science of the joyful wisdom, having demonstrated that sex lies at the core of life, takes us to the mechanisation of sex as, inevitably, the next step. If love is to be regulated and corrected by scientific and analytical methods—if knowledge dissociated from feeling can be proved to be the safest guide through the psychic world, who can object to the decrees of external authority in that affair which affects the community far more socially than the psychic transports or terrors of the individual—the expression of sex upon which human life depends? So *life itself* stands confronted by pure mechanism. The Wellsian era foreseen in *Pansies*—

"When men are made in bottles
and emerge as squeaky globules with no bodies to speak of,
and therefore have nothing to feel with"

—begins to loom upon the bright horizon of actual scientific possibility. Even now, the creation of human life is not to be dictated by the deep unconscious desire of individuals whose actions gain sanction by the measure of their accord with the deepest promptings of their natures, but is to be carried on by permission and according to the decrees of

the Church, or under the auspices of such contraceptive control as places the desire for a child on a level with the desire for a household commodity

Right in the centre of the vortex of mechanism stood D. H. Lawrence, protesting against this blasphemy against life and proclaiming the Holy Ghost in man as the only source of instinctive purity. He stood his ground, defying the whole mechanising tendency—in art, in industry, in manners, in religion, in life itself. Taking up his position at the centre of the vortex, he stood at the point where it finds its ultimate challenge, and it is from this point that the contrary movement, outward, in widening circles of creative life, will begin. That is the first significance of D. H. Lawrence. He represents a new movement, a movement in a contrary direction, a movement which he only set in motion by taking the first essential steps. It is a movement that is as full of life and expectation as the contrary movement is full of deathly despair.

We have spoken of Lawrence as “taking up his position.” The phrase is of course misleading. Lawrence did not take up a position. He was frankly and magnificently himself—poet, novelist, essayist, and it was only by virtue of being these things that he found himself in a position, much as a person in a drawing-room may find himself in a position if he says anything unexpected. *The White Peacock*, *The Trespasser*, *Sons and Lovers*, represent the ordinary limits of an original and successful writer in these days. They are retrospective in attitude—“daughters of memory” rather than “daughters of inspiration”—and they represent the cycle of Lawrence’s life up to the point of individual manhood. It is at that point that most novelists and most men stop. They then take life at its face value and “quit themselves *like men*” for the remainder of their repetitive days. It was at that point that Lawrence took the imaginative plunge which discovered to him wherein

manhood consisted. It was then that he found reintegration through emotional rebirth. It was then that he wrote a novel showing the deep instinctive basis of all real manhood and womanhood. And it is impossible to doubt that Lawrence knew that with this book he was making the first great sacrifice of the artist, the sacrifice of himself at the expense of dire gestative pains in the hope of giving birth to a form of reality which the world would welcome with joy, not least for its creative newness. Prior to *The Rainbow* he had written as closely according to traditional pattern as his intensity of vision would allow him. With *The Rainbow* he explored the tenderer and darker recesses of his own soul, paying gladly the price of every painful step for the hope of the treasure he yearned to bring to light. And he succeeded. There stood the epic of three generations representing for the first time the instinctive life of the English people during a hundred years. It was factually true, it was real, it was authentic. He had delivered himself of a burden lying nearer the heart than any work had lain for a century. He was launched on the tide of deep and faithful self-expression, and with prophetic eyes must have seen a new Hesperides no way beyond the horizon. He had dared to be defenceless. He had given himself away, as every great artist must. True-born people would be grateful for this.

Who can measure the effect upon Lawrence of the burning of *The Rainbow*? What *The Edinburgh* said of the Cockney School we get from the lips of a magistrate in these days. And the effect is perhaps not greater. But the burning of *The Rainbow* was a symbolic gesture of the attitude of society, and particularly of the world of literature, to Lawrence. The best-known men of that world declined to say a word for him, or for his book, in a magistrate's court. Henceforth this most trustful of men was suspect among his own confederates, and if bitterness had not

sunk into his soul during that time, Lawrence would not have been made of flesh and blood. Had he lived dependent upon the general goodwill which is the most common support of a writer, Lawrence's further work would have been furtive and fitful as a pool in a desert. But he knew, by this time, of deeper and more enduring sources. Again he knew a rebirth. The sincere reader of *Look! We have come through!* has only to understand the emotional inwardness of that poem-sequence and suffer its ecstasies and agonies with unshielded imagination to realise that marriage to a man of Lawrence's sincerity had the full religious significance of new birth. We will go further and say that it is easy to trace there all the traditional steps from the baptism to the cross, the sepulchre and the resurrection, the descent of the Holy Spirit and the walking in newness of life. So Lawrence went straight on. Deeply mistrustful as he may have been of the world without, from a world within there now welled up in him a flow of poems, stories, and essays more prolific and more deeply felt than ever.

Yet Lawrence never wholly recovered from the bitterness that attended the fate of *The Rainbow*. The seeds of mistrust and resentment were fruitfully watered by the deluge of misery and ostracism that fell upon him during the war, with the unhappy result that much of his later work is stained, marred, and distorted by bitterness and its ugly growth of personal animosities. We must even acknowledge that Lawrence is the ostensible parent of the collection of younger writers who have positively acquired literary reputation on the strength of their ability to copy and caricature Lawrence's worst faults, building their rotten structures over the cesspools of conceit and disgust. They have their ephemeral reward, but with Lawrence's death the necessity for discrimination becomes urgent. The essential Lawrence is based on a new vision of life.

This is imperfectly understood even by those who have read much of his work. Circumstances appertaining to the war and the law conspired to emphasise the less important to the neglect of the essential. *The Crown*—a series of essays now incorporated in the book *Reflections on the Death of a Porcupine*—contains the gist of Lawrence's philosophy, and is certainly the finest piece of imaginative criticism he ever wrote. It is little known. The same may be said of the all-important *Psycho-Analysis and the Unconscious* and *Fantasia of the Unconscious*. These are the true and only handbooks to Lawrence. With them, and the indispensable *Studies in Classic American Literature*, the reader will possess a key to Lawrence which has obviously never been handled by the general run of his critics.

"Simple, sensuous, passionate", said Milton of the essentials of poetry. Simple, sensuous, passionate, said Lawrence of the essentials of life, just as he echoed again and again "He for God only, she for God in him". But whereas Milton has earned for his statement the obeisance not only of poets but of every professor of poetry, every Mr Facing-Both-Ways of criticism, every sentimental or intellectual poetaster, the passionate advocacy of a life in consonance with what these people profess to admire has earned for Lawrence their scorn and disgust. Out of the same mouths proceed blessing upon Milton and cursing upon Lawrence for his application of the poetic doctrine of Milton to the art of living.

Why is this? How is it that people are to be found ready to drink as milk the opinions of critics who speak of Lawrence as a "genius" only to confer upon that word attributes of degradation and contempt? Why is there anybody left who will tolerate a critic ready to mouth Milton's dictum on poetry and from the same lips pour contumely on the man who said life was best lived in accordance with Milton's tenet?

It is an age-long story. All civilisation tends to move man from primal centres of life to dissociated foci. In all cultivation, native instinct is the most difficult force to remember and take into account. Just because our civilisation is old, our distance from the primal centres is as the distance of twigs upon an oak from the farthest contributory roots. We have become so cultivated that we do not know our houses have drains until they smell. We have become so confident in the mechanical use of intelligence that we take for granted the functioning of our instincts, even to the point of thinking it immaterial whether they can find true and natural expression or not. In time the instincts rebel against our want of care for them. In time the drains of a house become foul (the analogy is a concession to "cloacal" specialists). Then there is consternation. The idealist moves from the ground-floor of existence to some chamber nearer heaven. He cuts the cord between instinctive and religious life. He lifts his face to the sky, hoping for a fair wind. He curses the dwellers nearer earth for their bestiality. He makes the dis severance between life and poetry complete and preaches pure sublimation. It is a pleasant doctrine, but foul drains still smell.

In the history of literature that was very like the position at the end of the nineteenth century. The resistance which is now being offered to the way of life Lawrence strove for is just an intensified form of the resistance then offered to Havelock Ellis upon the publication of *Studies in the Psychology of Sex*. But with this difference. Whereas Havelock Ellis approached the problem from the standpoint of science, Lawrence's attitude was expressed wholly in the terms of art. The difference is too great to be summarily dismissed, for science is essentially a dissociated activity of the mind and can only treat of things that have objective existence. Sex, being essentially a means of expressing relationship, has no real objective existence and

is therefore not susceptible of pure scientific investigation. The attempt to treat it as if it were, inevitably causes distortion. And this distortion had already taken place before Havelock Ellis began his monumental work. Secrecy and lying about fundamental truths had already produced obvious distortion. It was therefore right as well as significant that Ellis as a scientist should begin his work with those aberrations from the truth which distortion made apparent. Nevertheless the true and living direction is by the desirable way of natural order and not by the corrective path of aberration. Therapeutic science begins by endeavouring to right a wrong, but art is creatively expressive and touches the primal springs of feeling that are for ever beyond the reach of science.

The grave and imminent danger, inherent in the handling of matters strictly beyond its province, to which science in the study of sex has exposed us for a generation, Lawrence will save us from if we can only read him with understanding. Unfortunately the signs that this is likely to happen are at present few. It is so much easier to regard sex as a matter of function than to know it creatively at the core of life. Courage and humility of a new kind must be born in us before we are able to believe that sexuality according to instruction and in harmony with fine principles is a form of self-abuse, while obedience to the laws of true and individual being is the imperative command of life. It is so much easier to hold the time-honoured notion that sex is something which respectability and reticence, privacy and abstinence, moderation and spirituality can make tolerable, than it is to live from deep instinctive centres that demand an absolute fidelity and a faith in life that goes beyond reason.

Our remarks have taken us beyond their immediate subject. Let us confess that the glamour and the glow of Lawrence's finest work hangs yet too nearly about us for

anything like final objective criticism. The day will come for that, but it is not yet. Lawrence had faults, glaring and even offensive, but they are as spots upon the sun. To draw attention to them at this moment is to pretend that a new planet has not arisen—that Lawrence was what the vulgar and the purblind would have him to be—a meteor of passing and strange brilliance. Such superficiality is self-deceit. Lawrence revealed the possibility of a new and real integration. He re-established belief in that primal innocence without which human life cannot grow and blossom into real fruition.

SOME VALUES IN "HAMLET"

(In this essay the terms Instinctive, Self-conscious, and Conscious correspond with the divisions of life into Childhood, Adolescence, and Maturity)

The Instinctive is pure, primary consciousness. The Self-conscious is the impure but inevitable dichotomy of consciousness that occurs at adolescence, and in which most of us remain fixed for life. Consciousness is achievement of Maturity, the synthesis of the Instinctive and the Self-conscious, achieved by the Imagination which has the power of objective realisation, or knowledge of truth. The three phases were named Innocence, Experience, and Imagination by William Blake.)

LIKE the Book of Job, *Hamlet* is a document in the history of human consciousness. It is a landmark in human self-discovery. It represents the apex of pure individualism, the purest knowledge man can have of himself when he stands alone in face of the universe. It is thus a complete epitome of self-consciousness. In the history of human growth it represents that "contrary state of the soul" to which William Blake gave the name "Experience."

Superficially it registers man's hesitation to accept as law the demand for retribution prompted by instinct. It stands for the pause in human consciousness which occurs when the realisation dawns upon man that there is no progression upon the line of the just retribution demanded by law. Superficially, *Hamlet* is self-conscious man confronted with problems easy of solution upon a purely instinctive basis, but insoluble from the standpoint of self-consciousness. The problem of consciousness is only stated in *Hamlet*; it is not solved. "Sicklied o'er with the pale cast of thought" is what all instinctive actions become when self-conscious-

ness begins to question their validity. They are found to lack the sanction of consciousness just because they are purely instinctive. They are outgoing actions which lack an incoming response and so remain held fast and immovable in the clutch of self-consciousness.

The psychological tragedy of Hamlet lies in the fact that his spiritual awareness is beyond that of the people in his environment, without whose confederacy it cannot fructify in action. He represents a new bud in the growth of consciousness: he is the precursor of another season, but a bud that is cut off by the frosts of early spring. Hamlet is sufficiently aware to know that more consciousness, not less, is the true demand of life upon him. He knows full well the insufficiency of momentary reversions to the instinctive for the solution of problems proposed by consciousness, and that awareness is his achievement—his gift to life. It is his knowledge that he has this gift that constrains his dying appeal to Horatio. The duty laid upon him by the Ghost was fully accomplished with the killing of the King, but the deed itself does not satisfy Hamlet. He has fallen in the fight for consciousness against unconsciousness, and it is really in order that Horatio may save consciousness that he appeals to him to save a wounded name. There is, moreover, deep inwardness in the fact that, but for a single tie of friendship, the truth would have perished with Hamlet's death, for it is through the communication of love that self-consciousness is transcended and passes into full objective consciousness. From this standpoint, Hamlet may be regarded as a martyr who dies for the faith of consciousness.

It is quite insufficient to regard Hamlet as a man psychologically incapable of doing his obvious duty. It is insufficient to see him as one so perplexed by "outrageous fortune" and the task of discovering a morally sound line of action that he is unable to move. Othello was "per-

plexed in the extreme", and he was driven by his perplexity to action. Hamlet is equally perplexed, but his perplexity produces the opposite effect. *Hamlet* is not a study of vacillation, any more than *Othello* is a study of resolution, and when Goethe treats *Hamlet* as this, the play becomes something much inferior to what it really is. The measure of the problem and the greatness of the play are according to the magnitude of the cause of the delay.

"Rightly to be great
Is, not to stir without great argument,
But greatly to find quarrel in a straw
When honour's at the stake "

Hesitancy in itself is nothing—a mere lapse in the mechanism of action, but in discovering the cause of hesitancy in Hamlet we are brought face to face with the profoundest problems of life. The profundity lies in the cause which must needs be great if its effect upon a noble character be so devastating.

The cause of the conflict lay outside any of the events that occur in the play. The play is a resolution of events that took place before it begins. The first of those events was the death of Hamlet's father, and indeed the play is all about the effects of that death upon him. In fact, to epitomise *Hamlet* is to say that it is all about death, and not until we regard it as a commentary upon death do we really know what it is all about. The theme is death as it appears to waking consciousness. The action begins under the shadow of death, "with mirth in funeral and with dirge in marriage", it proceeds by showing us life in death, and it ends with an awakening, through death, to newness of life, not only in the person of Hamlet, but in the State of Denmark. Death, as it appears to love and thus to consciousness, is contrasted with death as it appears to indifference and thus to purely selfish instinct. It is a theme "most common" to all who know what personal

bereavement means and have suffered the full impact of the shock that comes when we discover for ourselves that the world goes on in complete obliviousness to personal tragedy.

This simple, primary cause of Hamlet's melancholy is apt to be overlooked or minimised, but if it is not given full value we fail to realise Hamlet's spiritual condition at the outset of the play. And it is essential that we should realise this deeply, for if we cannot see his father's death through his eyes, then the whole play is out of joint. Right from the beginning there is an obvious difference between Hamlet and everybody else. Before ever he is aware of the cause of his father's death, he stands alone, a man apart, and what isolates him is the intensity of his sense of loss. When he says, "I have that within *which passeth show*", he is telling the simple truth about himself, truth that, just because it cannot be shown, demands imaginative sympathy for its perception. In all Denmark, Hamlet alone laments the death of the King.

What Hamlet is suffering from is of course a common experience—there is nothing "peculiar" about it—except its intensity in him. He is suffering from the shock inescapable to consciousness at the death of a beloved person, and the reality of his love for that person is such that the shock is not minimised by rational views of death. Consciousness being involved, the whole question of the permanence or impermanence of the object of his love is raised, just as the whole question of his own permanence or impermanence will be eventually raised when he meditates "To be, or not to be". Not that Hamlet is concerned about his father's life in another world: he does not question his father's existence there, indeed, throughout the play everybody—Hamlet included—seems to take survival for granted. Hamlet's burden is a living memory. His distress is to feel that his father's living memory has been

murdered For what Hamlet is confronted with on his return from Wittenberg is the removal of a pillar of the world, as it were in a night, and the continuance of the world in all but complete indifference to what upheld it.

In his father's death, Hamlet sees the hollowness of human life epitomised The fact that a great man's memory can thus pass to oblivion symbolises for him the heartless triviality of life And yet, that it can be as trivial as it appears is incredible to him, he simply cannot believe that the value his father represented can be expunged from life as if it had not been To his rich sensibility, this is unbelievable But the evidence stares him in the face, and it is this which leads him to question the entire value of life

Concerning the root cause of Hamlet's melancholy, Bradley has said

"It was not his father's death, that doubtless brought deep grief, but mere grief for someone loved and lost does not make a noble spirit loathe the world as a place full only of things rank and gross"

That is only too reasonable a comment The direct negative threatens a very delicate balance of values between grief for his father and disgust at his mother We need to remember that the effect of bereavement is according to the measure of love and not according to any reasonable estimate or valuation of the world "Deep" grief is never "mere" Moreover, is it not common to experience that upon a heart laden with grief the mere intrusion of the affairs of the world makes the world hateful? And the keener our grief, the more intrusive the world appears That Hamlet felt deep affection for his father is certain As Bradley himself remarks

"Where else in Shakespeare is there anything like Hamlet's adoration of his father? The words melt into music whenever he speaks of him"

That is true. Moreover, when Hamlet makes his frank avowal of melancholy to Rozencrantz and Guildenstern and says concerning it "But wherefore, I know not", we have no reason to doubt his sincerity, or think his ignorance feigned, but rather to understand that his very ignorance is due to that vague and undefinable yet persistent sense of not-worth-whileness which simple bereavement so often creates.

Therefore, so far from saying that the death of his father was not the cause of Hamlet's melancholy, we confidently assert that it was the prime factor. Natural grief for a dearly loved person was the seed-bed into which other causes dropped and found themselves at home. His mother's conduct intensified, but only intensified, what was already active. Had her grief been normal as her son's, he would never have known the bitterness of grief in isolation—an isolation so complete that he felt ostracised by his grief. And what we must understand if we are to plumb Hamlet's heart in the opening scene at the court, is that the Queen sides with death in its indifference to love, and that it is she who makes herself the mouthpiece of the insolent negation which death offers to love bereft. She, his mother, in fact becomes the voice of death. She who, by all the laws of love and nature, should weep most, weeps not at all, "within a month", and it is this hardness of heart, this lack of affinity where he had most reason to expect it that turns Hamlet's melancholy into open revulsion from the world.

Essentially there is nothing morbid or extravagant about Hamlet's grief for his father—nothing to suggest that it is abnormal or due to any sort of psychic inhibition. Moreover, there is nothing to suggest that he was melancholic or misanthropic by nature. His melancholy was "strange" to him. No misanthropist could have for his friend a man like Horatio. No, it is the court of Denmark that is morbid, unwholesome, diseased, and the business of the

play's action is to purge the court of that disease. "Denmark's a prison" "Thinking makes it so" It is a prison to the free and honest mind because the truth lies imprisoned in it And the keeper of that prison is King Claudius Hamlet is not worried about his own personal liberty he could be "bounded by a nut-shell" and enjoy the freedom of the imaginative mind But in Denmark that imaginative mind is troubled by the uneasy restlessness of the imprisoned truth that visits the mind in "bad dreams" When Hamlet first appears, it is he who stands for normal sensitivity over against a barbarous insensitivity which has lapsed from normal human consciousness In the very normality of his feelings lies Hamlet's tragedy.

Heightened consciousness comes about through the frustration of emotion which, unable to express itself in action, is precipitated in thought This frustration is what has been happening to Hamlet before the play begins. At the outset he is plainly asking himself what are the values of life—the permanent values, particularly the values of love and fidelity That his father expressed these is certain to him—certain as the love he still feels for him But that they have perished with his father—that his father was something and now is nothing is what the court of Denmark, and particularly his mother's homily would impress upon him So Hamlet is driven to ask himself how something can become nothing It cannot, and since it cannot, what blindness to reality, what lapse from consciousness, what sin against the light must be theirs in whom this breach in nature has taken place!

The spontaneity of his feeling for his father Hamlet cannot and will not deny It is himself But it is love for what is now disembodied, and its reality all Elsinore conspires to confute Not that which *was*, but that which *is*, they seem to say So what *was* becomes ghostly, and is soon to appear as a ghost, while what *is* is thus manifestly

sense-ensnared woman, his mother. So Hamlet is racked by the question whether his dead father or his living mother is the expression of life's real value. Moreover, to the measure in which he feels himself bound to his mother by natural ties, is he not himself sense-ensnared? Thus by his natural and normal affection for his parents his heart is cleft in twain—a description of his state which his mother will echo when he reveals his heart to her.

The cleavage between spirit and flesh is made absolute in Hamlet, first by his mother's action, and then by his sense of the relationship in which he stands to her. What he suffers through her heartless infidelity is not moral displeasure, or merely personal distaste, but the outrage of natural feeling—a sense of such blasting defiance of it that his own generation is made an event he cannot bear to think on. "And—would it were not so—you are my mother." To the tenderness of a heart made sensitive by grief is opposed the imperviousness of a mother to whom the author of his existence has become as nothing. Love is thus questioned at its source, and to question this is to question life at its root. It is also to make a young man's blossoming into love appear as a sick man's dream. By the one to whom he is most closely bound in nature, the cardinal values in life are treated as ephemera and the most transparent counterfeit of value is accepted as royal coinage. No wonder Hamlet is at odds with life long before the Ghost appears.

II

UNLESS it is clearly recognised that all Hamlet's reactions spring from a sense of outraged instinct, his character suffers wrong that does him grave injustice, for instead of the fierce response of vitally wounded feeling, there is substituted moral disapprobation and the displeasure of an injured egotist. The finely poised scales that suspend him

between grief on the one hand and instinctive outrage on the other are unbalanced and the argument is brought down to the level of morality. Hamlet then becomes a kind of philosophic curate seeking occasions to lecture his mother upon approved conduct. Shakespeare's Hamlet is, in fact, nothing of the kind. He is a man so deeply wounded in his instinctive life by his mother's perfidy that the natural delights of the senses only appear as allurements to corruption. He is a man denied the *right* to natural feeling for his mother. He is a man so grievously hurt in a natural relationship that his instinctive life has been cleft from top to bottom.

The degree of outrage Hamlet suffers can be measured if we read carefully his soliloquy after the play-scene

"O heart, lose not thy nature, let not ever
The soul of Nero enter this firm bosom "

What does it mean? It means that Hamlet is praying for enough self-restraint to prevent him from killing his mother. His immediate impulse is to kill the Queen. And highly significant it is that when, on his way to her, the chance of killing the King should offer itself most obviously, he should pass it by, only to greet the Queen a moment later in such a fashion that she cries out in terror of her life. By the ties of blood Hamlet is drawn to his mother, not the King, so his fury flies past the King to vengeance upon her who has most outraged natural feeling in him. It is his mother who has wronged nature in him. Where natural instinct is concerned it is she who comes nearest, for it was her womb that bore him. The fawning figure of the King at prayer becomes a thing to mock at and pass on. So he passes on, to let loose his wrath upon his mother. And that wrath is no mere moral disapprobation, his anger springs from outraged instinct, as the coarseness of his language proves.

Hamlet will behave like a madman to Ophelia because

the whole relationship of man to woman has been corrupted in his mind by his mother. Driven back upon himself, he sees Ophelia only as an example of womanhood, and the association of womanhood with his mother has made all womanhood abhorrent. Love appears as a springe to catch woodcocks. The measure of his revulsion may be assessed very exactly by the obtuseness of his behaviour to Ophelia. Objectively he simply does not see her. She has become a symbol, a cypher. He has lost the very means by which to see her, for the eyes of love that formerly looked out, now look in, and self-love, being a perversion, has become self-hate. His own self-hatred, his own self-despising, is therefore what he consistently expresses throughout the scenes between them. Here the psychological inversion is absolute. In relation to Ophelia he is "mad" indeed.

It is worth while pausing to look at the scenes between them (there are only two), for they are commonly misconstrued on the stage. The first supervenes immediately upon "To be, or not to be". that is to say, when the conflict in Hamlet's mind reaches its peak. Everything he then says to her is *à rebours*. There is the inversion of the belief that beauty is truth, truth beauty. its converse is what Hamlet is convinced of when he says "The power of beauty will sooner transform honesty from what it is to a bawd than the force of honesty can translate beauty into his likeness". And "the time that gives it proof" is the time that sees his mother transformed to a bawd. Throughout the dialogue his thought runs so continuously upon his mother that he might almost be speaking to her. The "old stock" which "virtue cannot so inoculate" is the stock of which he himself comes, and the judgment is upon himself through his mother. "Get thee to a nunnery" may well have been spoken pitifully, at least at first, for Hamlet is not thinking of the objective Ophelia at all, but

of this girl as something made in the mould of his mother, and of her future in relation to "such fellows" as himself. In the sermon that follows on this text what he is saying is that his own self-mistrust is such that it is impossible he should ever be able to make her happy. a man with no chance of happiness can never be a fit custodian for the happiness of another. The "offences at my beck" are the tolls taken upon his future by the Ghost's commands "Twixt a father crying for revenge from the grave, and a mother living debauched, what eyes or ears has he for love? There's no love left in him, and because of this there can be none in his speech to her. The ties of love have been broken by fate let her recognise, through that fact, the infamy of life let her seek refuge from such infamy in a nunnery. As for her father, let him not meddle in the quarrel that rages between Hamlet and his own house, lest he come between "the pass and fell incensed points of mighty opposites." Even when he says "Be thou as chaste as ice," it is of himself, and the calumny he has inherited through his mother that he is thinking. And again, of all the "monsters" which women make, the one he knows best is himself, and the mould wherein he was made is his mother.

Clean out of mind is the individual Ophelia to whom he speaks, saying "I have heard of your paintings too," for he could hardly refer to her paintings as hearsay when he was actually looking at them. No, it is of woman generically that he is speaking, and of his mother as a glaring example. These superficial deceptions are just such as appear in his mother through his eyes, and it indeed "hath made him mad"—mad with the madness of one who, having looked upon horror, sees its image everywhere. "We will have no more marriages" is an obvious universalisation of his own intent. The "all but one" at the end is the keynote of the whole discourse. By anyone not suffering from psychological inversion it would have been struck at the

beginning And it is perfect Hamlet to remember the King at the end, almost as an afterthought, having spent his whole discourse upon his mother

The tragic irony of the scene lies in the fact that all Hamlet's words are spoken over Ophelia's head The venom is directed at himself, at his mother, and—at long last—at his uncle, but the arrows shot over his own house pierce Ophelia's heart far more surely than those other arrows he was to speed later strike the honour of Laertes. His "indirections find directions out" In probing his own heart he wounds Ophelia's mortally

More subtle still are his "indirections" upon the only other occasion they appear together, which is in the next scene There the mood of the actor should clearly betray the false levity of cynicism "Here's metal more attractive" is revealing truth, truth that has more sting in its comparison than Hamlet is aware of His mind has become bawdy, as a loving mind turned upon itself always must But he was neither as crude nor as lewd as those who misread the text have made him, for when he says

"That's a fair thought—to lie between maids' legs"

the second half of the line is obviously not spoken to, or heard by Ophelia, or her question "What is, my lord?" becomes nonsense The vulgarity is plainly an aside And after she has inquired what the fair thought was, we may suppose him to be smiling sourly over his own secretiveness when he replies "Nothing" But that his humour is, alas, as superficial as lewdness itself is only too clear to him when she can think him "merry" The bitterness of "O God, your only jig-maker" is abysmal, and back his thought runs to his mother Finally, the resentment which the thought of his mother evokes strikes like a knife

"*Hamlet* Is this a prologue, or the posy of a ring?
Ophelia 'Tis brief, my lord
Hamlet As woman's love "

Not a lover's ring, but words that strike death He stabs at himself in the thought of his mother, but the dagger sticks in Ophelia's heart

The direst effect of his mother's conduct upon Hamlet was the gulf it created between him and Ophelia, and in regard to this, Polonius's judgment was not merely at sea what he persuaded himself to believe was actually the opposite of the truth. Mistaking the last effect for the first cause, and acting upon this error, he tried to make the wheels of destiny turn backward. He who had disbelieved in Hamlet's love for his daughter when that love was simple and true, jumped to the conclusion that true love was the cause of the distress actually created by the conflict between Hamlet and his mother. By so doing he achieved what was in effect an identification of the adulterous Queen with the virgin Ophelia, and it is as the man who does this that he is loathed by Hamlet. Little wonder, for could there be anything more infuriating to a star-crossed lover, distracted in his search for a way out of his labyrinth, than to have the nearest of kin to the girl he loves, craftily and surreptitiously acting upon the belief that innocence itself was the mother of hell-born madness? Polonius voices this belief with oracular conviction, and it was this assumption of wisdom on grounds of the crassest ignorance that made him so bitterly contemptible in Hamlet's eyes. He sees him as a man whose years have served merely to rob him of his belief in innocent love as one who cannot even value the native virtue of his own daughter, but is so corrupted by worldly wisdom that he regards innocence merely as a snare for lust, and simple love as the cause of madness.

In *Hamlet*, Shakespeare holds the mirror up to human consciousness. The play is an image of human awareness. But awareness is essentially static: nothing can happen to consciousness except increase of consciousness. Therefore

it is pre-ordained that Hamlet himself cannot, as we say, get anywhere. In relation to his environment he is in the same position at the end as he was at the beginning. Because he is the mirror of consciousness, intensification of consciousness is all that he can experience.

The events of the play are not consequent upon his desire or his will, but are all accidental. Polonius is killed by accident. Ophelia is drowned by accident. The coming of the players is a happy accident. Hamlet comes upon the King at prayer by accident, and himself escapes from death in England by accident. It is by pure accident that he is present at Ophelia's burial, by accident that the foils change hands in the fight with Laertes, by accident that the Queen is poisoned, and only by a confluence of fortuitous events that he comes to kill the King at last, in fact, the shambles at the end is brought about by accident.

What does this mean? It means that when consciousness is isolated from the active life around it, the events that happen are not informed by consciousness and therefore nothing can happen but what is essentially fortuitous. The play moves *naturally* by accident, and its active incidental melodrama is the natural and only proper background to the figure that stands in immobile contrast and relief. Thus it is that the groundlings go to see this play because so much happens, while the discerning do not go to see anything happen, but only to see what nobility of soul, facing the worst imaginable odds, looks like.

Hamlet acts, and only can act, in spontaneous reaction to events. His condition of mind compels him to await the dictate of circumstance. He cannot do the Ghost's business because he is wholly engrossed in doing something else. He is engrossed in the internal process of understanding, and being thwarted in understanding, he is prevented from taking the kind of action that is prompted by understanding. Conscious act is impossible to him because, with feverish

intensity, the formative process of consciousness is going on within him. His acts cannot be "resolute" because the process of resolution—true resolution as distinct from wilfulness—is what is going on inside him. Because he has so much to do internally, externally he can do nothing of his own accord.

So it is that whenever we see Hamlet at one of those moments when he calls to mind the Ghost's behest, he appears as a truly pitiful figure. Indeed, his incapacity to fulfil the obvious demand made upon him is such that his heroic character begins to hang in the balances of our patience. But if we see the problem from his angle (and not to do so is to miss the heart of the play) and imagine for a moment what we should desire for ourselves had we been caught between the tides of feeling set in motion by grief for a beloved father's death and the open sight of a mother's perfidy, then we shall feel that nothing more untoward could happen to us, at such a time, than that we should be laid under duress to act at once with the utmost resolution. For the good of his own soul, Hamlet needed time and opportunity to adjust himself, not merely to violently changed circumstances, but to the outrage on natural feeling which his mother's act involved. He needed what he asked for and is denied (in the first Act) by those who themselves had created his need. He needed solitude and separation from what his natural instinct revolted against.

And now mark. Not only were these denied him, but beneath the abyss into which his return to Denmark had plunged him, another opened, and the voice from this abyss not merely denied him solitude and separation, but enforced on him their opposites. It charged him to plunge himself in the very midst of things and to act the part of judge and executioner in what was actually his mother's case, for (in that the wrong done to Hamlet's father by her

marriage was hers and not Hamlet's) the wrong to be set right truly lay with her, and not with her son at all. Therefore, from the standpoint of all that was most needful to Hamlet, and all that could be wished for him, the Ghost was indeed "a damned spirit" because it denied him the time and opportunity for self-recovery and, under the constraint of duty, commanded immediate action.

When Hamlet says:

"The spirit I have seen
May be the devil, and the devil hath power
To assume a pleasing shape, yea, and perhaps
Out of my weakness and my melancholy,
As he is very potent with such spirits,
Abuses me to damn me"

what he is considering is the propagation of damned spirits upon low spirits, as well he might, for his own common sense recognises in his original grief and melancholy a ready breeding ground for morbid phantasy. It is, in fact, just the place for such a decadent alliance. The reality of the Ghost he does not question, but he does question the spirit's good intent because it appeared when his own spiritual state was low.

Because the carrying out of the Ghost's requirement spelt this psychological inversion to Hamlet, all action became suspended. Because his unconscious demanded the rehabilitation of his psyche before he could act in harmony with it, he could not exercise that conscious will to kill his uncle which never faltered. That is the answer to all the vexed questions about Hamlet's delay. He delayed because, in the deepest sense, he lacked the means wherewith to act. His soul was truly upon another business—the business of understanding. To an already wounded and disrupted consciousness the Ghost had appealed for that kind of drastic action which no man of worth can take without complete consciousness. Once

we appreciate the causes of his inhibition, all is clear. Inasmuch as we appreciate the profundity of Hamlet's melancholy, by so much shall we appreciate the inertia natural to it. Indeed, that *he* should want to find reasons for his inactivity is reasonable; that *we* should not know the reason is absurd. If Hamlet were to kill the King, he needed to do so at the strong command of his own soul. To do it at another's bidding, before he had resolved the emergent problem of his relationship to his mother, would have been for him to violate something in himself far more inviolable than his conscious mind was aware of. "Thus conscience does make cowards of us all", for conscience registers the indecision of the soul before alternative courses and is the check to that kind of action which leaves half the man inactive. No action taken without psychic coherence can be valid, whether it be acceptance of the King's shilling or the killing of a King.

So it is that Hamlet is *most* himself when he is engrossed in philosophic reflection arising out of the simple effort to comprehend his experience. He is *least* himself when he contemplates action, for then he is nine parts actor taking his prompt from the Ghost.

His mother's marriage, coming right upon his father's death, upset his whole philosophy. He needed time to re-create a philosophy adequate to new and dire experience; but the Ghost rose up from purgatory to prevent any such time being granted. When Hamlet tells Ophelia that he has more offences at his beck than "thoughts to put them in, imagination to give them shape, or *time to act them in*" he is telling her the tragic truth. He, out of whose delay an entire play is made, truly lacks time to make up his own mind. The tragic conflict lies in the paradox. The demand for instant justice is set over against the demand of consciousness for time to understand, and the clash is between these two demands. Had the Ghost won, there

would have been little or no play, and little or no Hamlet. Had Hamlet won and the Ghost gone unavenged, our primary sense of human justice would have been affronted. Hamlet gets a measure of time—time enough for us to recognise the depth of his integrity, and the Ghost gets belated justice at the price of his own son's life—which is itself a parable upon the demand of justice for revenge. That Hamlet won what he fought for, we know when he declares "The readiness is all." His triumph was to obtain that readiness in spite of all the urgency of a ghost from hell.

III

A WHOLE commentary might be written upon the modern, vulgar presentation of Hamlet as a weak egotist who compensates for his inability to tackle the actual problems of life by taking refuge in morbid philosophy. Such a commentary would show how every age finds its own portrait in Hamlet. The Victorian tendency to weaken the character until he becomes a miserable moralist was no doubt due to the pronounced moralising tendencies of the nineteenth century. In a later generation it has been customary to give the part characteristics of the "greenery-yallery, Grosvenor Gallery" tradition, and to this day it is made to retain the æsthetic taint. Shakespeare's Hamlet was certainly a young man of taste, and since he is almost the only one of Shakespeare's tragic heroes who is not a barbarian in some respect, it was natural that in a decadent period he should be made to reflect the *fin de siècle* manner. The adaptation is only one more tribute to the universality of the character. The Hamlet of every age will naturally tend to conform to the prevailing idea of what a poet ought to be, and the popular idea of the poet in our times has been of the æsthete and the intellectual, but a little historical sense, and half an eye for the text, will show a wide disparity

between the posturing emotional figure we have had to put up with, and the man Shakespeare intended.

To begin with Hamlet was, and must remain, an Elizabethan character. He must therefore be a man of parts, and not at all the weedy Tom Noddy of our tradition, a type that would never have escaped the derision of the groundlings at the Globe. In an age when every man of parts was first a soldier, possessing physique enough to be able to defend his own person with foils or daggers, and growing refinement (if there were any) upon the stout stalk of lusty health, a semi-phthisical Hamlet would not have been endured for a moment. So to present Hamlet as an æsthete or an intellectual is to misrepresent him seriously. In Ophelia's catalogue, the scholar comes third only to the courtier and the soldier, and if Hamlet was "the glass of fashion and the mould of form" he must have betrayed those common and even vulgar signs of manhood that would have made him commendable in the eyes of a hard-living Elizabethan crowd.

The producer nowadays needs to beware of softening Hamlet. The qualities in the character that were taken for granted in Shakespeare's time (and therefore needed no insistence in the text) now require to be stressed, or the prime attribute of the man, which is nobility, will be overlaid. If we do not see at once that Hamlet is a prince of the royal blood, a gallant by tradition and upbringing, prepossessing in appearance, and (as Mr Harcourt Williams has pointed out) physically strong enough to drag a well-fed corpse off the stage without effort, then the part is wrongly cast. If the part is played entirely in the atmosphere of intellectual subtlety, contempt will lie in wait for the actor, because the strong and noble may be dignified in the act of stooping to things that make the weak and finical appear contemptible.

The scenes between Hamlet and Ophelia are unbearable

unless we have the assurance of our eyes that he is every inch a man. Ostensibly he behaves like a cad, so his whole bearing must give us instant assurance that he is in reality the opposite, or the scenes are ruined. Duality is, of course, the key to everything in the play, and the duality of Hamlet himself is the most important of all. By nature one in whom thought and action are perfectly allied, now, when thought has usurped all power, his native power of action must be made apparent all the time. Otherwise he merely becomes a limping figure of the real man—a figure of disease, instead of the pattern of health infected. There must be original health before it can be “sicklied o’er.” The “pale cast” alone will make us sick.

Akin to this matter of Hamlet’s appearance is the question: Is Hamlet a lovable character?

“Yes, and no” is probably the commonest and truest answer. Essentially Hamlet is the noblest of all Shakespeare’s characters, and when he reveals his essential self he is the “sweet Prince” of Horatio’s elegy, but the state of self-consciousness is the most unlovable of all conditions, and it is as self-conscious man that Hamlet appears. Hence, the more acute his self-consciousness, the less likeable he is. To know him essentially, and to love him, we have to separate the essential man from the state by which he is conditioned. That, by the way, is what Blake invites us to do when he bids us separate “the individual” from the “state”, in order that we may judge and condemn what is temporal and damnable in the state and perceive what is lovable and eternal in the person.

There is nothing obviously attractive about Hamlet in the scene where he first faces the court, indeed, the very necessary task of making him at once a sympathetic character is one designed to tax the actor’s capacity—probably it can best be done by a reticence and rather naive, youthful charm that will evoke pity. Hamlet is at his worst, his

most unlovable, in the scenes with Ophelia and the Queen, and once we appreciate his psychological condition we see that this is natural enough, but the actor's understanding of the character must be profound if he is to give us true Hamlet in these scenes. The rudeness to Polonius also needs subtlety in interpretation if essential sympathy is to go undamaged, and the same is true of the meeting with Laertes at the funeral, where, unless we see Hamlet as a man so grievously inhibited that he has to struggle for bare sanity, he becomes fantastical.

But in contrast to these distorting mirrors of the real man, Shakespeare, with marvellous art, contrives to give Hamlet just those contacts with friends who are not involved in the main plot that serve to show us the essential person. To his friends, and so to us, he is able to be himself, and whenever the true and spontaneous Hamlet appears it is with such forthcoming assurance that we can never again forget his real nature. Horatio's chief purpose in the play is to provide this sympathetic foil. Rosencrantz and Guildenstern also at first evoke the same man. They serve, as it were, to grade his "madness" by showing us on the one hand how fairly Hamlet can respond to life when it appears in terms of friendship and open-handedness, and on the other, how "desperate" he can wax when the earth opens at his feet. Indeed, he speaks the truth in jest when he describes himself as "but mad north-north-west", for it is by degrees that accord with his psychic proximity to the insoluble problem of establishing a right relationship with his mother that his power of competent response to environment is to be measured.

With Horatio, Hamlet is himself. With the Players, still himself—less deeply, of course, but still serenely. With Rosencrantz and Guildenstern, a self that begins to take shelter when suspicion is aroused. With Polonius he is a dual figure, preternaturally aware of the fool in the coun-

sellor With Laertes, a figure still, and capable of similar second-sight in that he can perceive in the youth, whose rash haste makes him the very opposite of himself, a brother in misfortune, a man similarly oppressed of destiny But with the King and Queen, Hamlet is so darkly withdrawn as to be almost invisible, and with Ophelia, he passes out of sight into sheer psychological condition

The subtle and reflective way in which Shakespeare portrays this variable character is marvellous It is also perfectly true to life, for to such different levels of himself Hamlet must fall because, in the stage of growth at which he stands, he is not master of himself but the embodiment of an awareness that is purely static and wholly reflective Driven back into self-consciousness at the moment when he would normally have begun to enter upon full objective consciousness, he is a pipe for circumstance to play upon, and he responds with all the notes that destiny, through the persons of the play, calls forth Caught between the tides of life, he is unable to "be himself" except by happy and momentary chance But in these moments he steps out of the inhibiting womb of self-consciousness and reveals himself as the very soul of chivalry and map of honour a man whose heart can beat time with his poet's intellect

Into Hamlet's mouth Shakespeare puts a description of nobility that shows what he believed nobility consisted in Nobility was constancy to life—

"for thou hast been
As one, in suffering all, that suffers nothing"

Hamlet's praise of Horatio is the highest praise the man who is "aware" can bestow on the man who is fully conscious, and constancy to life was what Hamlet saw in the man who, while suffering all, was as one who suffered nothing Constancy was a virtue Shakespeare adored,

but Shakespeare's constancy was not a wilful, wooden fixation but something deeper and far more expensive a fidelity that might be described as self-consistency—the response of a mirror of life that never tampers with its own reflection. What has been described by Keats in other connections as "negative capability" here reaches its apotheosis: there is total acceptance without judgment. Such an attitude is his, and his alone, whose sense of life and trust in it have absolute objectivity. Such negative capability is indeed the complement of a positive faith in life—a faith that transcends circumstance. When it is attained, the triumph of the human spirit is absolute. Fate must bow to him who is invulnerable to Fortune.

His own vulnerability to Fortune is what Hamlet is struggling to overcome throughout the play. He fights for time in which to do this, because he knows that if he is to possess his own soul he must build a wall of consciousness between himself and "outrageous fortune." Rightly he understands that man is little better than a beast so long as his actions are mere reactions. He has prescience enough to perceive that the very purpose of life is to teach us how to act at all times out of full consciousness. To be as one in suffering all that suffers nothing is his own ambition. Whether he actually sees in Horatio one who has achieved this ambition, or whether he idealises his friend, matters little, for the dramatic purpose of the words is to stimulate in us the desire to see Hamlet thus.

That he himself is vulnerable—that his "time is out of joint"—we need no ghost to tell us. Indeed, the play is stuffed with references to the wrongs of Fortune. Fortune is Hamlet's theme. He greets his friends with it. When Rosencrantz and Guildenstern first appear, they are at once made to declare their attitude to Fortune and thus reveal at the outset the poles that separate them from Hamlet.

It is a master stroke of dramatic fitness. They are "the indifferent children of the earth"

"Happy, in that we are not over-happy,
On Fortune's cap we are not the very button "

Hamlet's calamity is that he is not thus "indifferent" the very button on Fortune's fool's-cap is just what he feels himself to be That is her "cursed spite" But if they are indeed his friends, let them not play Fortune's part: let them not take the pipe out of her fingers and do her cursed office upon him In that first dialogue, truth underlies all the jest These friends, who stand in such contrast to him, do stand to Fortune "in the middle of her favours", for they are the King's emissaries, courting favour and risking disaster, while to Hamlet she has already proved herself a "strumpet"

The perfect commingling of blood and judgment that Hamlet tells Horatio he so much esteems is just what he is longing for himself He has been made subservient to Fortune and must release himself from her slavery To be "a pipe for Fortune's finger" is what Fate has proved him This is to be "passion's slave" to be "lapsed in time and passion", the sport of circumstance, one of "we fools of nature" "Our wills and fates do so contrary run" that our need is an indifference to Fate which consciousness alone can achieve

We do well to remember that the scene in which Hamlet apostrophises Horatio is intimately related to the scene that precedes it, for in the scene with the Players, Hamlet is showing how needful the commingling of blood and judgment is to the dramatic art The perfect actor is, for him, made in the image of the man after his own heart When he says to Horatio

"thou art e'en as just a man
As e'er my conversation coped withal "

what he is saying is that Horatio is as truly and justly balanced in the actions of real life as the players should appear in all the occasions of their art "All the world's a stage," and the philosophy of good acting can be, and is here, applied to life As the purpose of playing is "to hold, as 'twere, the mirror up to nature", so the purpose of a man's life is to enable it to present a true and unruffled reflection of objective reality There is no irrelevance about the scene with the Players Hamlet's own desire is epitomised in the words "For in the very torrent, tempest, and, as I may say, whirlwind of your passion, you must acquire and beget a temperance that may give it smoothness" How to acquire such a temperance is his own task He longs for that sublimation of the instinctive by the conscious—for that readiness for Fate and indifference to Fortune—in which alone man is free He longs for that just proportion in life which he can find and teach in art

And in despite of Fate and Fortune, Hamlet achieves it before the end He attains it by the offering of himself, in the assurance of Being, to life or death indifferently

"If it be now, 'tis not to come, if it be not to come, it will be now, if it be not now, yet it will come the readiness is all"

Time-present and time-to-come meet and melt in the consciousness that has appreciated the eternality of Being Fortune is born of Time, and both Time and Fortune are outfaced by a readiness to meet them "as one in suffering all that suffers nothing" This is the realisation of full consciousness that Hamlet has striven for throughout the play When it comes Hamlet, the unready, achieves readiness

IV

UNDERSTANDING of the eternality of Being is what is absent from the greatest of Hamlet's soliloquies The half-dozen

words with which it opens—"To be, or not to be"—are perhaps the best known in the language, yet their meaning may still be disputed. They are still the crux of the whole matter and the judgment seat of all our interpretations. With all his magnificent common sense, Dr Johnson was baffled by them. Perhaps Hamlet was not the best subject for a moralist and a logician. Johnson's paraphrase of the vexed words runs:

"Before I can form any rational scheme of action under this pressure of distress, it is necessary to decide whether, after our present state, we are to be or not to be"

But in putting the problem thus, Johnson puts the cart before the horse. He wants to go too fast, and so starts in the middle. He succeeds in giving us very good reasons for his own fear of death, but only a travestied version of what was in Hamlet's mind. For the point about "To be, or not to be" is that Hamlet is *not* trying "to decide whether, *after our present state*, we are to be or not to be." The words "after our present state" are a Johnsonian interpolation. The question is immediate and refers to the present moment. Had Hamlet meant what Johnson means, the question would have been the much simpler one: To live, or not to live. And that, emphatically, is not "the question."

"To be, or not to be" is at once the simplest of all the considerations of self-consciousness, and a question of pure metaphysics.

As the first, it implies: Is the burden of consciousness worth bearing? Which may be stated more simply, but less accurately, as. Is life worth living? Consciousness is the most wonderful thing about human life—its greatest effect and therefore the first thing that comes up for consideration in any evaluation of human life. "To be," humanly speaking, is to be conscious, and it is the Being of consciousness that Hamlet is concerned about, not

survival after death It is consciousness, not material fact, that, he is debating "To be" is to be aware primarily to be self-aware, and Hamlet at the peak of self-awareness, questions the whole value of such a condition Values, and the persistence of values, underlie all his thought.

But as the second—as a metaphysical question—the truth about "To be, or not to be" is that although it now seems to Hamlet to be *the* question, it is actually not a valid question at all To man, consciousness is not a matter of choice he cannot choose whether he will have it or no, so that "To be, or not to be" is the one question he cannot reasonably ask

Hamlet of course discovers this before the end of the play He comes to understand that consciousness of Being is, as Blake would have said, experience of Eternity, and therefore not subject to considerations of time and change, or, as we might express it nowadays, not a space-time question He comes to see that, so far as consciousness is concerned, readiness to live and readiness to die are the same thing "the readiness is all" And to say that it is all is the only possible answer to the question, for as it is a purely metaphysical question, it is only to be answered by a statement which is truly a synthesis of the contraries Dialectically, the thesis is "To be" the antithesis is "Not to be" the synthesis is "The readiness is all"

The primary question—Is the burden of consciousness sufferable or insufferable?—immediately *leads on* to the secondary question Is life worth living? But note the change In the subsidiary question the subjective mind is given a material object Life becomes the object, in contrast to consciousness The question has moved on from a spiritual to a physical consideration The transition is perfectly natural and is from consciousness, or Being, to life, but unless we perceive that a transition occurs, we shall post-date the question, as Johnson did, and believe

that Hamlet begins with the consideration of survival, whereas that question is entirely consequent.

After this transition, the question becomes If Life and consciousness are inseparable, what about an alternative? So the reverie passes quite naturally to the consideration of death, not as physical fact, but as a condition in which consciousness may or may not persist Is it "*nobler in the mind*" to suffer consciousness of life, or to end consciousness by death? If we could end consciousness by opposing life "'tis a consummation devoutly to be wish'd". But "there's the rub" Can the problem of Being be solved by solving the problem of Existence? Being is immediate, and comprehensible only in the sense of an ever-present Now Existence is comprehensible only in terms of Time. They are different in essence. The soliloquy therefore moves in a circle, as it was bound to do because it set out to resolve, in terms of dependent circumstance, a problem stated in terms of independent consciousness Man can determine Existence, he can choose between life and death over consciousness, as such, he has no control He cannot choose to be conscious He cannot choose to be not-conscious. He cannot *choose* "to be, or not to be"

The question of immortality is, of course, quickly drawn into the reverie upon consciousness Necessarily, because consciousness is not really ponderable in any other terms And because death is unknown the self-conscious mind cannot consider death except in terms of fear Indeed, our views upon immortality will be found to reflect our differing degrees of consciousness as nothing else does If we say we are unconcerned about survival, I think we show a very immature consciousness we have not reached the stage Hamlet arrived at in "To be, or not to be" But if we are permanently concerned about our *own* survival, then we are suffering from a fixation of self-consciousness For as we come to objective consciousness, we realise that no one lives

to himself we know, in fact, that life consists in the interaction of subject and object, and that the completely isolated person can only be said to exist, for to be completely isolated is to lack intercourse with anything outside the self. To that state Hamlet was almost reduced. The world was valueless to him because he had lost the means of intercourse with everything—except himself. Hence the necessity of the soliloquies. But Hamlet's deliverance did not lie in the way of a cultivated indifference to objective reality, but in an understanding of the nature of Being and the immortality it implies.

While the conscious person may be indifferent about his own survival, or may believe that he does not desire it, it is impossible to be indifferent about the survival of anyone dearly loved, because indifference (both to Being and Existence) and love are totally incompatible. Therefore it is no reply to the question of the fear of death to say that we do not fear it for ourselves. The only question worth asking is whether we fear death on behalf of those we love. And concerning them it may be said, "Where your treasure is, there will your heart be also." It is a physical impossibility not to fear death on behalf of those we love; it is equally a *psychological impossibility* not to desire their immortality. And since, upon the physical plane, the fear of their death cannot be removed, fear can only be overcome by a process of sublimation which conceives of their personality as being super-physical or spiritual; we must conceive of them as capable of existence, or rather of Being that is independent of matter and sense perception. As Professor John Macmurray has pointed out, the question is whether we can, or cannot, entertain such a conception of personality. If we cannot, then we must accept the death of the most deeply loved friend as total loss; we must reconcile ourselves as best we can to the belief that this personality, which was an absolute value and something

of unique significance to us, was in fact completely perishable

If, on the other hand, we can imagine that personality is persistent, then to be concerned about what *happens* after death is really to be thinking about the timeless in terms of Time. For events need time in which to manifest themselves. happenings, as far as we know, can only occur under the conditions of time, so that to speak of survival in terms of happenings is to show ourselves lacking in the understanding of that wherein Being consists. We are, in fact, concerned about what "happens" after death only in so far as we are self-conscious and self-concerned. For to be fully conscious is to be concerned about the Being of others, to rest in the sense of their Being, which was, is, and always will be, the only abiding cause of our delight in them. In so far as we can be said truly to know one another, this sense of another's Being is what we have: this Being is their personality, their personal identity. Because it pertains to Being, it is timeless. Therefore, that it should persist in conditions different from this life, in that they are essentially timeless, seems perfectly conceivable. And that is all that matters to us when we are really conscious.

Blake says somewhere that in Eternity every thing shines by its own internal light. By Eternity he did not of course mean a merely future state: he meant a condition of Being which comprehended and contained Time. What I take him to have meant was that in Eternity every thing is fully conscious, wholly loving, completely self-indifferent, and thus entirely imaginative. And that happens to be an exact description of the poet when he is writing poetry. Blake's idea is that every thing that is wholly and perfectly itself becomes incandescent: it just is, and manifests itself by emitting its own light. It has eternal Being as distinct from changing Existence.

Hamlet—an image of self-consciousness created by

Shakespeare's imaginative consciousness—seems to me to have this peculiar incandescent quality. The play is the representation of a state of Being. Hamlet is self-conscious man in an unconscious world. He therefore stands for what is enduring in the midst of what is ephemeral. And because he is made in the image of what is eternal and unchanging—because "To be" is his whole function—he partakes of the nature of Eternity, in Blake's sense, and shines by his own internal light. As the image of consciousness he stands for the source of imagination. And imagination is the power by which one thing becomes perfectly reflective of another. Thus every man's experience finds its counterpart in *Hamlet*. It is pre-eminently the work of imagination in which what we see depends upon the experience we bring to it. As the express image of consciousness, Hamlet represents the universal soul of man, and each one of us sees in that soul, according to the position he takes up in relation to it, some particular facet of the essential nature of man. Expressing Being, which is common to all consciousness, the play enables each one of us to see himself in Hamlet according to the degree of his own self-awareness. No two people bring the same consciousness to this mirror of consciousness, so no two Hamlets are alike. Hamlet himself is one, but like a diamond he is multi-faceted and rays out colours as different as violet from yellow, and all the hues of the spectrum are there.

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It is possible to discover a contemporary significance in every immortal work of art. What is the specific significance of *Hamlet* to the society in which we are living?

The tragedy is the tragedy of noble man living in a debased and ignoble society. Hamlet is self-conscious man encompassed by a world of violence that demands of him the traditional response of violence. The nations of Europe

are now self-conscious entities surrounded by violence and individually incapable of imagination our world, in fact, is the world of Hamlet, a world that has suffered injury and cries out for justice. Our need is the need of Hamlet: the need for a pause wherein we may come to self-realisation before we commit ourselves to courses of action that retain the sanction of tradition. Our question is Hamlet's question.

"Whether 'tis nobler in the mind to suffer
The slings and arrows of outrageous fortune,
Or to take arms against a sea of troubles,
And by opposing end them"

Like Hamlet, we are held in the fixations of self-consciousness and cannot commit ourselves to the realisations of objective consciousness. Like him, we need a pause for self-realisation in which to discover what he found in that pause that the purpose of the conscience that makes cowards of us all is to teach us there's a divinity that shapes our ends.

Historically we have reached the psychological position of Hamlet a state of indeterminacy brought about because we are required to solve the interior and individual problems of consciousness *before* we can find a solution to the exterior problems of society. Hamlet solved his own problem; but not that of society. We do not come to that resolution until we come to *Cymbeline*, *A Winter's Tale* and *The Tempest*. But before Shakespeare handed us the key to the problem he showed us by vivid contrast how the problem was *not* to be solved. In *Macbeth* we are confronted by those who refused to let conscience make cowards of them, but rather screwed their courage to the sticking place.

We, like them, are free to turn a deaf ear to the paralysing questions of consciousness to which Hamlet listened. We are free to defy its hesitations and take the traditional way

of power, showing the full exercise of it while we still have the chance—even as Macbeth did. But it is incumbent upon us to remember that whereas Hamlet achieved the vision and peace of "one in suffering all that suffers nothing", Macbeth, merely by defying personal consciousness, was driven inexorably upon the way of ever-increasing violence, until his world became nothing but an insane slaughter-house, while, the pole-star of integrity lost, his wife wandered into the outer darkness.

NOTES ON "MACBETH"

I

MACBETH is the contrary of *Hamlet*. Whether it was written in contrast is another matter, a poet hardly works in that abstract fashion, but I think it is helpful to understanding and not altogether fanciful to imagine Shakespeare as saying something like this "You have seen in *Hamlet* to what pitiable perplexity consciousness can reduce a man of real integrity, and how hardly he can win salvation in the face of adverse fate. Now look on this picture, for I will show you what happens to those who choose the contrary course and, although made hesitant by the promptings of conscience, flatly refuse to let conscience make cowards of them. Death itself shall seem to them a happiness, and oblivion a release they seek in vain."

Moreover, it is highly probable that some of the critics of Shakespeare's day found *Hamlet* long and tedious. In every age there have been those who are impatient of everything but action, particularly on the stage. There are still those who are impatient of Hamlet's scruples and think that they delay the action unduly. "This is too long", they say with Polonius, but courtesy forbids our replying "he's for a jig or a tale of bawdry, or he sleeps". Nevertheless, *Hamlet* is long and there can be little doubt that the critics of the day said so. So Shakespeare wrote *Macbeth*, and *Macbeth* is short. It was not, of course, a conscious defence of *Hamlet*, yet such it appears. It is the negative presentation of a case that *Hamlet* states positively, or alternatively, the positive way of action which Hamlet was prevented from taking by his scruples.

The obvious contrasts are most striking. Both Hamlet

and Macbeth kill a king, but Claudius is the image of malignity, Duncan the pattern of kingly benevolence. Claudius usurps Hamlet's place in his own house. Duncan enters Macbeth's castle only to bring it honour. The Denmark to which Hamlet returns is "a prison", the castle to which Macbeth returns "The temple-haunting martlet does approve". By the hand of a usurper-king Hamlet is robbed of his rights. The kingly Duncan bestows nothing but favours upon the hand of his usurper. The contrast is heightened in every way. Filial piety and the constraint of duty cry out upon Hamlet to execute justice, "examples gross as earth" exhort him. Everything in nature cries out to stay Macbeth from the most inhuman injustice. Hamlet is essentially the sufferer, and a doer only by force of circumstance. Macbeth is essentially a doer, and a sufferer only as a result of his deeds. Hamlet becomes immobile against a background of tragic accident: Macbeth moves from the immobility of the conscience-stricken man to such incessant tragic action that Scotland itself stands palsied before his murderous activity. Hamlet is unhappily in love. Macbeth is happily married.

"Thus conscience does make cowards of us all" provides us with a key to *Macbeth*. Hamlet reaches that conclusion by way of the consideration "For in that sleep of death, what dreams may come. Must give us pause". Superficially this merely means that we cannot know what may be the character of the after-life, but more deeply it expresses the truth that consciousness is, by its nature, indestructible, and just because it is indestructible, the attempt to destroy it by destroying life will be futile. Consciousness is thus something against which a man will fight in vain, for its power is beyond man's control. And it is because consciousness is invulnerable that conscience, or awareness of consciousness, makes cowards of us all.

This "cowardice" Hamlet accepts. He accepts the

burden of consciousness and endures the pause which its onset involves Reluctantly, of course, because

“enterprises of great pitch and moment
With this regard their currents turn awry
And lose the name of action ”

But in this willingness to submit himself to the fullest awareness his experience of life can bring him, Hamlet surrenders himself to the true purpose of life He is the man who accepts the burden which conscience lays upon him Macbeth and his wife do the opposite They defy conscience to make cowards of them

Apart from the idea of moral order, this might appear to show the greatest possible courage But the promptings of conscience are not the fiat of external dogma Conscience is the guide to integrity it springs from within and therefore represents a principle of life coming to birth within the organism itself To defy it is therefore to deny the child already in the womb, and such an abortion is what Macbeth and his wife practise The conflict which Hamlet waged was with an external power frustrating the true fulfilment of his life. Macbeth and his wife carry on the conflict within themselves, and their contention is not merely tragic but frightful, because it is against the life-principle within themselves. Their resolve to kill Duncan was, because of their deep awareness of what they were doing, the resolve to self-destruction Their courage was suicidal

Macbeth is the tragedy of imagination Hence it is the most frightful of Shakespeare's plays *Lear* is perhaps more terrible and *Othello* more heart-rending, but *Macbeth* is appalling in its frightfulness because it presents with lightning vividness the sudden disintegration of a human soul. *Hamlet* is pure tragedy: man at war with fate. *Othello* is the tragedy of faith, *Lear* the tragedy of pride,

but the tragedy of imagination is more awful than any other because, in Blake's words, "the imagination is the man himself" That is what we watch in *Macbeth* the destruction of the man himself The deep horror lies in the fact that the tragedy of imagination cannot begin to be enacted until the protagonist has given to the common enemy of man his eternal jewel It is the tragedy of damnation

Imagination is born of consciousness no consciousness, no imagination The fearfulness of *Macbeth* lies not in Macbeth's treachery, his ruthlessness or his appalling career of butchery, but in the complete annihilation of a man capable of the highest imagination It is Macbeth's power of imagination that gives us the stature of the man, for imagination is according to depth of consciousness it can only reach the height of vision by springing from an equal depth of consciousness So it is according to our sense of the power with which he stands endowed that the pity and terror of Macbeth's tragedy is felt

Now the original birthplace of imagination is in love Love is its life blood, for without the apprehension of an object—without the loving grasp of external reality—the imagination would have nothing to act upon And in so far as imagination retains its own life blood, its visions are images of truth, for according to its selflessness it mirrors the true and living identity of the thing it beholds But if the imagination should deny the very power that has brought it to birth, then the direst sort of horror will begin For instead of rendering back living images of the truth, imagination, lacking the only power by which it can be truly apprehensive of reality, will fly to love's contrary, fear, and its visions will then be visions of the perverted and contorted self cast upon a screen of frightful phantasy Then instead of being the supremely creative power, it will become the active agent of destruction.

Imagination is itself indestructible. therein lies the horror of Macbeth's condition. Imagination is the energy of the soul. once released it can never be destroyed. Perverted, it lives on, gathering intensity out of suffering, creating the images of darkness with the same copiousness that the loving imagination creates images of light. In place of the images of reality it gives birth to the images of unreality where "nothing is but what is not", and instead of an ever-increasing apprehension of objective truth, there is an ever-increasing apprehension of diseased phantoms. Step by step Macbeth is driven back to an entirely subjective attitude to the whole world. Life itself becomes nothing but the shadow which the light of yesterday casts upon the abyss of to-morrow. Loveless imagination throws the fantastic shadow of the distorted self over everything. Denying conscience as a guide to consciousness, Macbeth denies the only light that could lead him out of the imprisonment of the subjective self. Thus he is compelled to fortify this self against the whole world.

We are not left in any doubt about the degree of Macbeth's consciousness. The scene which ends with the determination

"I am settled, and bend up
Each corporal agent to this terrible feat"

begins with the soliloquy

"If it were done when 'tis done, then 'twere well
It were done quickly. if the assassination
Could trammel up the consequence, and catch,
With his surcease, success, that but this blow
Might be the be-all and the end-all here,
But here, upon this bank and shoal of time,
We'd jump the life to come."

The truth is, of course, that "when 'tis done" it is but begun. indeed, the tragedy of Macbeth himself only begins with the murder of Duncan, and the appalling fact is that

here, before he commits the crime, he is himself able to tell us how impossible it is to "trammel up the consequence". No man could have fuller or clearer consciousness of the retribution that follows the abuse of consciousness. He is prophetic of his own future. His foreknowledge of the consequence of murdering Duncan is almost absolute. Precisely what he meant by jumping the life to come is doubtful, and it is doubtful for the very good reason that we may doubt if he was thinking very precisely on that event. Logically, it is of course a plain impossibility, for strictly speaking, if it be "to come" then it will come, jump how we may. But Macbeth is to provide his own comment on the attempt to jump the life to come, and it is this "To-morrow and to-morrow and to-morrow". The life to come becomes an everlastingly deferred to-morrow, an eternity of hope deferred, an eternally desired, eternally unrealised longing for respite from the horror of to-day.

Morality apart and on grounds of policy alone, he himself states an incontrovertible case against the murder

"But in these cases
We still have judgment here, that we but teach
Bloody instructions, which being taught return
To plague the inventor this even-handed justice
Commends the ingredients of our poison'd chalice
To our own lips"

This consciousness cannot commit that crime. It must itself be murdered before Duncan can come to harm. It brings him to a halt and rebukes him as clearly as Balaam's ass. As he himself confesses

"I have no spur
To prick the sides of my intent,"

but he has hardly uttered the words before the spur arrives. It comes in the person of his wife

II

MACBETH is tragedy in the highest degree because the hero is destroyed in the exercise of that quality which is his strongest virtue—his courage. The play opens upon the scrannel note of the witches and directly afterwards the theme of courage is announced. It is for his courage that Macbeth is famous. among brave men, he is the man, he has dared to do all that may become a man according to the barbaric standard of the time. But now, in the play, he is put to the final test of manhood. Can he love and still be a man, or will the woman steal his manhood? Will she take from him the initiative which must ever remain his if he is truly to fulfil his manhood and maintain a marital relationship according to the true order of nature? Will she, in the name of manhood, convert him to a beast?

Macbeth was already riding the edge of a precipice when his wife snatched the reins. His weakness is shown in his need of her resolution to enable him to fulfil his own corrupt desire, and in her very capacity to make up in daring what he lacked lies perhaps the most poignant and agonising feature of the play. Only the courage to do more than may become a man is lacking in him, and by no other means can we conceive of her inciting him to this than by the appeal to him to show that initial quality of manhood which in their relationship—and in that alone—he shows himself to be lacking.

In a word, Lady Macbeth as his wife knows his weak spot. As between them, she holds the initiative. We are quickly made to feel that she has always taken the lead. And whenever a woman in the marital relation assumes that position a perversion of natural order takes place. In the true and right relationship the man draws strength from the

woman as a plant draws sap from its roots, and the woman blossoms upon his strength, but if, through his weakness, that order is not maintained and the initiative power slides into her hands, then, consciously or unconsciously, he will suffer from a sense of frustration and his normal attitude to the woman will be that of a competitor, and if that fail, then he will decline into a subservient acquiescence and show a rank and obvious lack of all the distinctive qualities of manhood

The chink in Macbeth's armour is shown in his relation to his wife. He follows in the one place where it should be his honour and privilege as a man to lead. Hence it is of the highest significance that Lady Macbeth should dissertate upon this weakness in him immediately we see her, and that directly she begins to think in terms of action she should cry "Unsex me here". It shows her instinctive sense of his weakness. It shows that in her most intimate relation with him in the past she has known that to her falls the lot of playing the man.

Alack, when a woman plays the man in default of her husband, she cannot help playing the devil. Once released, there are no bounds to an instinctive desire that has been frustrated. When she sees herself in the guise of manhood her woman's breasts yield gall for milk. Since courage is the badge of manhood, she will be that and nothing else. So, by an imaginative substitution, she realises her ideal of her husband in herself and in an invocation of fiendish ecstasy dedicates herself to the labour of bringing him to birth in her own image. What she experiences at this moment is a kind of Satanic annunciation.

"Come, you spirits
That tend on mortal thoughts, unsex me here,
And fill me, from the crown to the toe, top-full
Of direst cruelty!"

She becomes the virgin bride of the spirits of evil. And

Then, with the knowledge that in this the deepest issue of their lives he lives in subservience to her, she goes on to taint his valour

"Wouldst thou have that
Which thou esteem'st the ornament of life,
And live a coward in thine own esteem ?"

and in those words his self-esteem is identified with her esteem for him (What an echo this is to awake when, in her sleep-walking, she says "Fie, my lord, fie! a soldier, and afeard?"")

Henceforth, upon the refrain of "all that may become a man" all their interchanges throughout the play will sound

"When you durst do it, then you were a man,
And, to be more than what you were, you would
Be so much more the man "

Very closely related to this man is the suckling whose brains she would dash out had she been so sworn Implicit is the unconscious thought that she would rather murder than give birth to the child of any husband who might be a coward, and the thought has taken lodge in his mind when he cries.

"Bring forth men-children only,
For thy undaunted mettle should compose
Nothing but males "

The inversion of their true order is glaring But not at his word will she give birth to men, and not at her word can he become the man of her dreams Yet in the mutual fantasy that she can make him into the image of her desire, and that he can play the part and so become the man—like actors who do not know their parts but wait each upon the other's prompt—the frightful deed gets done The mine she has laid beneath her husband to raise him to the height of a superman goes off at last And the result is earthquake As a man he simply explodes and becomes the living image of a horror-stricken child This man, whose brandished

steel but yesterday smoked with bloody execution, looking now at his blood-stained hands can only whimper "This is a sorry sight", and then—reminding us of the praying King Claudius, but with a childlike naiveté that truly bespeaks his imaginative greatness—go on to wail in infant accents his total loss of innocence. The horror is intense because, above this puling infant, rises, like an avenging Polyphemus, the enormous cloud of his imagination, and the storm is unloosed when that imagination announces that he has murdered that which is the image of innocence—human sleep.

And now the test is upon her. That which exploded him has buried her. Where now is her authority? It is the maternal voice of a vexed and frightened woman which says "A foolish thought, to say a sorry sight" "Consider it not so deeply" "These deeds must not be thought after these ways" Like a mother she must tell him to wash his hands and even show him how to do it, but against the roaring thunder of an imagination that reverberates above this childish impotence, witnessing to the total cleavage in his consciousness between knowledge of good and choice of evil, her meagre words of chiding sound like fretful whispers.

From the moment the deed is done their positions are reversed. Henceforth he will grow as she dwindles. The seed she planted with such frightful zeal germinates in a night and grows like a upas tree. The man made in the image of a woman's perverted imagination is suddenly realised and, as the full nature of the monster that he is dawns upon her, her dream fades out and the terror of his actuality becomes more than the woman in her can support.

I do not think there can be any doubt but that Shakespeare intended us to accept her fainting, in the second Act when they are confronted by the nobles, as genuine and not merely as a ruse. For the interpretation of it as real

accords with the psychological exchange that undoubtedly does take place between Macbeth and his wife as a result of the murder. The childish incompetence of her "Woe, alas! What, in our house?" stands in direct contrast to the marvellous aptness and efficiency of his "Had I but died an hour before this chance, I had lived a blessed time" and "Who can be wise, amazed, temperate and furious, loyal and neutral, in a moment?" And it is reasonable to believe that when Lady Macbeth heard from the lips of him who an hour or two before had been trembling on the verge of terrified madness, words of such explicit and imaginative lying as Macbeth uses to explain how the guards had done the murder—when she saw the assurance that could prompt such words—her nerve gave way. The contrast was more than she could bear. He whom she had welcomed in a sudden access of hope as her ideal husband suddenly became apparitional to her. The insane belief that by this proof of his courage she might realise the dauntless man of initiative she had yearned for, suddenly appears in all its insanity when instead of the blunt lie of the resolute man of action, Macbeth paints the picture of Duncan's death with all the persuasive detail of the artist and describes the crime with all the vividness and eloquence of the poet.

He overdoes it. Slow to start, he completely out-distances her. She sees him as one who, having been sent on a journey to hell and back, has gone to hell but is unable to return. The man of her dreams would return, wash hands and wear "the golden round" like a man. What shall she do with this frantic creature who—at war with the phantoms of his disordered imagination—brings hell to earth with every word? She has unlocked a door she cannot close again, and through it sweeps the ever-growing train of horror.

The frightful thing that has happened is that she has

succeeded all too well All that she had proposed for herself in that first fearful invocation comes to birth in Macbeth He becomes the child of her own inhumanity, the abortion of her perverted mind How closely he bears the likeness of the thing she made herself is to be seen if we compare her second soliloquy (Act I, scene 5) with his at the end of Act III, scene 2

"Come, thick night,
And pall thee in the dunnest smoke of hell",

is her invocation, which he repeats with

"Come, seeling night,
Scarf up the tender eye of pitiful day"

His "Things bad begun make themselves strong by *ill*" takes us straight back to her

"thou wouldst be great,
Art not without ambition, but without
The *illness* should attend it"

Thus, having fought to make him the man she would have him, her horror is to realise that he becomes the very image of the fiend she, in her invocation, made herself.

MONEY AND *THE MERCHANT*

MONEY is a dangerous subject. Polite conversation avoids it. You may talk about economics, but not raw money. While it is fashionable to belong to a school of economics, university lecturers have to be careful how they talk to undergraduates about the vulgarity of money. For money is a great mystery. I will lend you my books, my house, even my car, but my money has a rate of interest. You will freely offer me a drink, food and cigarettes, but I must not ask you for sixpence, and if you offer it me, I am offended. Yes, money is a great mystery. Only one race understands it.

There is something sinister about money. It flows around us like water in an English August, yet it is sacrosanct. It is so unstable that the bright sun of credit will melt it into thin air, but the guns of war will bring it out of the sky like rain. Yet it is as hard as rock, the irreducible minimum of social necessity, to-day a collection of figures on paper from which a puff of opinion will blow off the noughts, to-morrow a handful of hard coins wherewith to build the only barrier that will stand between us and ignominy.

Money is so commonly the measure we unconsciously apply to men that he who speaks of it critically will be quickly "sized up." The shrewd never tell of their own. "Put money in thy purse," says Iago, and we take his advice, as secretly as possible. Income-tax communications are strictly private, and what a man is "worth" is divulged only at his death. Rate money higher than wisdom, and in the world of men you will pass unreprieved, for money is the token of civilised self-preservation, and fear insists upon the first law of nature. So money has a permanent

place in all our thoughts. Our social roots are in money; no one can be allowed to live without it. We are tied to money. It is the shore to which every human craft is anchored, and will remain anchored until mankind has learnt the greatest lesson history can teach it—how to live by a more spiritual means of exchange.

A large measure of disregard for money is one of the few things fools and wise men have in common, but they have it between them with this difference, that whereas wise men have a higher sense of value, fools have none at all. The task of the wise is to make the object of their higher esteem apparent, so that in the eyes of all men the regard for money will go by default. And this is difficult, because the object of their higher esteem is life itself, which is indefinable. The value of life we can only appreciate obliquely; the value of money is immediate and direct. So the money-bird in the hand is esteemed above the living-bird in the bush. The task of wisdom is to teach men to love and enjoy what they cannot grasp.

The arts provide us with the wise man's talisman. They proclaim consistently the higher value, and they constitute the only activity of man that does this consistently. Science does not proclaim the value of life any more than it proclaims the value of money, though pure science may be almost an art. But pure science would soon die were it not for the human sustenance constantly given to it by applied science, for knowledge is in itself, strictly speaking, valueless; to be humanly appreciable it must be made serviceable. Art, on the other hand, is directly appreciable. Its worth lies in its assertion of the value of life above all other values. Art cannot be bought, for its value is beyond money in the sense that it is beyond the valuation money is capable of making. Therefore to appreciate art is to take the first step towards a world in which men will live by a more spiritual means of exchange than money. The

farmer who loves to grow corn for its own sake has taken this step. Anything appreciated for its own sake destroys the money-value. This explains the truth of Blake's aphorism "Where any view of money exists, art cannot be carried on."

Of course the idea of living by a more spiritual means of exchange than money is highly romantic—it has never been done—at least, not successfully for any length of time. But the idea persists in spite of experience, and its persistence is prophetic. Sooner or later we shall have to translate it from the region of romance to the world of fact, or the idea will poison us. The perpetual rule of life by money, life will not endure.

That is really what Shakespeare was saying in *The Merchant of Venice*—his most often misinterpreted play. Sir Arthur Quiller-Couch (in *Shakespeare's Workmanship*) regards it as a heartless fairy tale. This seems a heartless opinion, for it is undoubtedly a romantic comedy of heart's desire, designed to throw the life-value and the money-value into the strongest possible contrast.

A play that ends where it begins, in a world in which good-fellowship is the ruling principle. The only currency these Venetians understand is the currency of friendship, where he who has is debtor to him who has not, where the only enemy is the man who will not accept such currency but exalts a lower meed of worth and sanctifies it in the name of justice. He is the enemy because the gratification of his desires would drag life back from a civilised to a comparatively barbaric state. He is the enemy because he would check the free flow of money, which should flow healthfully as blood in the human body, and by the incision of usury play the vampire. Shylock is a symbol of the Mammon that can be served only by the negation of God, to sentimentalise him, after the modern fashion, is not merely to damage but to destroy the action of the play.

Shakespeare made him human, and so pointed the way to his redemption, but he left him inhuman as well, and thereby showed a subtlety and a truth to life which he emphasised again in the character of Iago

Money is to-day what Shylock was to the world of Venice—the forbidding aspect, the dark principle, the shadow in the sun, the grim necessity Its logic is inhuman It has principle, but its principle is insufficient for the flexibility of human life The problem is how to circumvent it without destroying the foundations of justice And the answer is, by compelling it to the strictest interpretation of its own logic

That was how Portia solved the problem She took the Jew at his word and kept him to it “A verbal quibble” Not at all, on the contrary, the turning upon itself of the weapon of logic basely misused in its attack upon life And Shylock was convinced by the only means that would carry conviction

By such a piece of strict rationalisation would money be convinced to-day “Realise your wealth,” said Portia. “Liquidate it in the open court If you cannot do this, your inability disproves your claim There is no entity in money Even as flesh is mingled with blood, so inseparably and inextricably is this, for which you claim a sovran right, woven in the fibres of life” Compel money to be strictly honest and it will lose its power to terrorise Confine it to the work of exchange and it will lose its power to beget For money that breeds is the anomaly in the act it has assumed an attribute of the creature, and when its life is threatened what can it do but seek compensation in flesh?

The theme of *The Merchant* is the interdependence of human beings in civilised society—an inviolable interdependence This is the idea that Shylock outrages It appears most obviously in the Trial Scene, where a man

stands wholly dependent upon a woman. It is shown in Portia's dependence upon her father's will, her maid's cheerfulness, and Bassanio's love. It runs like a thread through the play, showing itself in the dependence of Bassanio upon Antonio, of Gratiano upon his friends, of Old Gobbo upon Launcelot, of Lorenzo upon Jessica, even of Shylock upon his daughter and his friend, and in the dependence of all of them upon favour and circumstance. All the sympathetic characters are shown as living in happy human interdependence. On them the sun of fortune shines in the end: they come to weal. All who arrogate to themselves wealth or merit (not only Shylock, but the braggart Princes of Morocco and Arragon) come to woe.

The play is a romantic allegory.

"If we press the *Odyssey*, *Paradise Lost*, even *The Ring and the Book*, as if we press *Bluebeard*, *Cinderella*, *Little Red Riding Hood*—they are almost always true to imagination, usually to emotion, seldom to fact. Circe in fact no more turned the companions of Odysseus into swine than Cinderella's god-mother turned the pumpkins into a gilt coach, Satan never addressed that speech of his to the fiends in council: at any rate there were no reporters present. And likely enough Mammon followed Belial with a plain 'Hear, hear!' content, like many another eminent financier, to let a clever youngster do his sophistry for him. Nay, if we take *The Faerie Queene* or *The Pilgrim's Progress*, or any great allegory, ancient or modern, what have we but a naked, deliberate, and successful attempt to inculcate truth by narrating that which never happened and never could happen?"

The passage is taken from Q's essay in praise of *Cymbeline*. He would little think of applying it to *The Merchant of Venice*, for *The Merchant* fairly sticks in his gizzard. Among his delightful, judicious and apt appreciations—full of the humour of sound proportion and graced by a spirit of delight that reflects the soul of Shakespeare—only *The Merchant* comes in for double-damnation. "He failed to

find any heart in it"—a play written from the heart, in defence of the heart, and in which the heart alone triumphs! Antonio, who wears a suggestion of the cloak of Prospero, gets called "an experienced man of business", and of these faithful friends and lovers he says "every one of the Venetian *dramatis personæ* is either a 'waster' or a 'rotter' or both, and cold-hearted at that." Bassanio, that typical Elizabethan courtier, is just "a predatory young gentleman" who takes "a two to one chance against him", and "the pound of flesh and the caskets are monstrous and incredible."

Well, it just depends whether you look upon them as fact or allegory. Sir Arthur has denied his own precept. There is a harmony in *The Merchant of Venice* too fine for us to hear while the muddy vesture of economic security doth grossly close us in, it is a harmony such as criticism in the opulent nineteenth century was not likely to hear. Can we hear it? Perhaps not. But Shakespeare trusted to an audience so romantic at heart and so adventurous in spirit that it could readily imagine a world in which the principle of avarice might, without pity, be given leave to hang itself, and another world, foreshadowed in the closing scene, wherein the principle of friendship inspires such exquisite concord that heaven and earth are constrained to join in the marriage-making.

THE MELANCHOLY OF JAUQUES

THE experience of artists is common, their response to experience is peculiar. Artists take the stuff of experience and transfigure it. When Shakespeare came to write *As You Like It* things had evidently gone awry with him. Rosalind's first words, "I show more mirth than I am mistress of", reveal the mood. Shakespeare was wilting, perhaps, under some slight of fortune, piqued by some queenly injustice, resenting "art made tongue-tied by authority".

"Happy is your Grace,
That can translate the stubbornness of fortune
Into so quiet and so sweet a style"

But although Shakespeare transfigures, taking us into an ideal world at will, he never wholly leaves the world of reality. The earth from which his people spring is always there, there is always a fragment of stone untouched by a chisel. He keeps an earthly chorus. *Hamlet* has its Grave-diggers, *The Tempest* its Caliban, *Romeo and Juliet* the old Nurse, and *As You Like It* the melancholy Jaques. Each provides a clue to the particular play's origin. *As You Like It* is Shakespeare's compensation for disappointment.

Jaques is the original old earth, the untransmuted element, the dark background, the commonplace reality. And Rosalind is inverted Jaques.

There is nothing for laughter about him, he is the complete misanthrope. His misanthropy is heavily stressed in the first account of him, where he is pictured weeping over the hunted deer, for an exaggerated concern for animals that goes hand in hand with an indifference to the fate of human beings is the hall-mark of misanthropy. The Duke's company in the forest form a compact community, despite all disadvantages. They have not taken

refuge from society in solitude, but in spite of it they show how the gregarious instinct of unsoured human nature can bring a highly desirable society into being, and is indeed its basis. But to Jaques the forest is a refuge. He swears the Duke's company usurp it. Theoretically he wants it all to himself, though in practice he is well pleased to have an audience.

Self-aggrandisement is all he really cares for. Men's differences with him he sees as challenges to his greatness. He must laud it all the time, he must ever be preaching, and the insensibility of the world to his sermons wounds him. Thus he is driven in upon himself still further. He must preach to himself, he must live upon his own hump, and here we touch the core of melancholy.

Jaques is a man apart. He is one of those not uncommon men who, having keen intelligence, perceive that between them and the general body of society there are many differences. Whereupon they concentrate upon those differences, they make a religion of them, and entirely neglect to consider the attributes they have in common with their kind. This they do until they come to think themselves unique, and by virtue of their dislikes take to themselves the name of philosopher, when in truth they are only non-conformists. Jaques is wisdom without love in society based entirely upon goodwill.

He is as vain as Narcissus. Nothing is real to Jaques, except himself. All else is flat, static, and objective. There is no interplay between him and his environment. He preaches to it, dictates to it, and has relationship with nothing.

Touchstone, the fool, who will have no meaning to life but that "we ripe and ripe, and then, from hour to hour, we rot and rot", becomes at sight Jaques' patron saint. Here is a philosophy that knocks the bottom out of all philosophy—a sort of philosophical nemesis, it is a system of nihilism completely after Jaques' own heart. He, too, will

skip the world of consequences by wearing motley, especially as it will give him untrammelled leave to play the judge

“Invest me in my motley, give me leave
To speak my mind, and I will through and through
Cleanse the foul body of the infected world,
If they will patiently receive my medicine ”

And the analysis of his wish Shakespeare has made with an exactness that would delight the heart of a psycho-analyst. The Duke sees through this pretension to the rôle of a reformer in a trice, and does not scruple to show Jaques, plain as parish church, how the law of compensation works.

“I can tell what thou wouldst do
Most mischievous foul sin, in chiding sin
For thou thyself hast been a libertine,
As sensual as the brutish sting itself,
And all the embossed sores and headed evils
That thou with liceps of free foot hast caught,
Wouldst thou disgorge into the general world ”

And there we reach the cause of all misanthropy; its expression, too, we see to be nothing more than self-disgust being perpetually transferred to others

With what a touch of genius Shakespeare withdraws Jaques when the marriage hymns are sung and the reign of love begins! The transmutation is complete the sick mood, that might have spent itself in dismal realism, is exhausted, it has yielded all its nourishment to bring forth this flower of ideal gaiety. The time has come for its incarnation to disappear. The Duke would have him stay. he is loth to lose so fine a foil to his own good nature, but nothing could keep Jaques now. he could not breathe the atmosphere of such a joyous company.

It is the women who oust Jaques. Misanthropy can just tolerate the society of its own sex, but the reign of mutual happiness touches its wound too deep. He is compelled to go, and the place of his retreat is significant: it is the Duke's “abandon'd cave ”

BEAUTY AND FREUD

FREUD is the Darwin of our day—the patient, studious lover of knowledge who in the course of his vocation found what seemed to him an important clue to the understanding of his own species, and who pursued that clue with tenacity of purpose until he discovered certain facts about the nature of man which his fellows have, slowly and reluctantly for the most part, been compelled to acknowledge as incontrovertible. Both Darwin and Freud dug about the roots of human nature, Darwin in the field of biology, Freud in the more fibrous soil of psychology. Both met with violent opposition, chiefly from those whose interests lay in other than scientific directions. The names of both will be recorded with those of Descartes, Galileo, Newton, and Einstein among the great benefactors of the human race. Both have been followed by disciples whose willingness to apply theories held tentatively by the great men themselves has outrun all discretion. As “Christian” has come to stand for something in the popular mind very far from the simple and tremendous teaching of Christ, so “Darwinism” and “Freudian” stand, for the man in the street to-day, for something Darwin and Freud would have difficulty in recognising.

Freud is the man of his time who most essentially belongs to that time. In an age of disintegration, he is the great disintegrator, the great analyst in the age of analytics. It is for this reason that he receives so small a measure of justice at the hands of his contemporaries; for we dislike those who are capable of taking us to pieces. Apart from the comparatively small number of people who regard Freud with veneration amounting to worship, he is probably the best-hated man now living. The prophet of instinct,

he is hated instinctively Freud is believed to have desecrated the last remaining sanctuary of man's secret and mysterious holiness He has insulted with the name of incest what was believed to be the most beautiful of all expressions of feeling—the love of a child for its parent He has substituted for the sacred word that was synonymous with Deity the hideous, atavistic synonym "libido" He has invaded the shadowy moonbeam country of dreams, which was the traditional land of heart's desire, and shown it to be a cave of lust and rapacity

Small wonder Freud is instinctively hated Love is the most spontaneous emotion of which we are capable: it is more natural and comes quicker than hate, being the primary instinct upon which all life depends Of this instantaneous emotion Freud has made a slow-motion picture, designed to show the victim the mechanics of something more native to him than his own breath, more integral to his nature than the motions of his blood More than this, Freud has evolved a technique whereby this emotion can be artificially produced and brought into play, a technique, moreover, that is an essential part of what, by a gross misuse of terms, has been called psycho-analysis The artificial stimulation of affection in the patient for the analyst is technically, I believe, called "transference" Transference is love, and there is a lot of artificially created transference now in the world, adhering to singularly unsuitable recipients of it, which both analyst and patient would fain be rid of, but they cannot Small wonder Freud is not universally acclaimed It is an easy business nowadays to make our houses habitations for those seven devils that are worse than the first

Mr Waldo Frank gets to the heart of this matter in a paragraph taken from his admirable critique of modern civilisation, *The Rediscovery of America* Speaking of the quackeries of the time he says

"Small intellectual groups have turned the technics of Vienna and Zurich into a cult. This has been done by setting up the 'causes' 'under' our consciousness as god, the jargon that describes these 'causes' as the one critical language, and the search for the 'causes' in oneself as the Way of Life. The empiric theory is, that the neurotic should 'solve' his problem in the hermetic symbol-relation with the analyst, in order to be able to go forth better equipped to solve it in real life. What actually happens is that the patient is placed in an infantile relationship under some single individual who lacks even the vicarious wisdom of a church or a race tradition to make him worthy. This relation, called 'transference,' reveals the Power element, in the particularly dangerous disguise of science."

Knowledge, however, has her sacred rights, and only cowardice and obscurantism will rail against this Pandora of the unconscious. When Freud discovered the secret mechanism of dreams, he let loose upon the world a flood of knowledge that will be a very long time integrating itself in the mind of man, but which, when it is assimilated, will as surely lead to "widening chambers of delight" as any other branch of truly applied knowledge. Freud is a child who has had the curiosity to take the clock of the human psyche to pieces and, for the life of him, cannot put it together again, but it is better thus than that the clock should stop and remain an object successively of mystery, veneration, and false prophecy. If the soul of man is sacred it is sacred in its parts, and the mysticism which fears analysis is nothing more than a false traditionalism. It is the mysticism which, instead of seeing the world in a grain of sand, prefers to believe that it may be sensed in nebulous cosmogony.

I said that Freud, having discovered the mechanism of the psyche, which his probings into the realm of the unconscious revealed to him, and taken it to pieces, was unable to put the organism together again. Such a statement will not, of course, meet with general acceptance.

For what else, asks the good Freudian, is the whole technique of psycho-analysis designed? The obvious answer is that mechanical reconstruction differs fundamentally from creative life. The bones of a man may be so skilfully hinged together that the skeleton will stand upright without obvious aid, yet a living man is not to be created by such means. Psycho-analysis may teach a man behaviour: it cannot teach him life. Analysis is a process whereby motive for action is discovered, and it is possible for skilled analysis to discover motive behind motive until the whole of the conscious action of a past life is laid bare to the conscious memory of the actor, but beneath the deepest-known layers of the unconscious there are unfathomable depths, all potent in their affective power upon the actions of any individual. In the normal life of any child, even after it has left the womb, the unconscious is prompting the most far-reaching actions—actions that may have determining effect upon character—long before consciousness has begun to function. Confessedly psycho-analysis cannot investigate these, and, indeed, were that “thorough and complete analysis” which many a whole-hearted psycho-analyst promises his patient, possible, then—so inextricably are we all bound up in the bundle of life—the operation could not be successfully concluded until the first vestiges of life on this planet had been through the analyst’s sieve.

Not thus will Freud make the gift of his discovery acceptable to mankind in general. The promises of “normality” and “harmonious functioning” fail in their attractiveness while Freud himself, and every other man to whom the word genius has been rightly applied, fail to pass the test. A general application of curative analytics to all adolescents is happily not a scheme which commends itself to human beings whose common-sense knowledge of life teaches them that the law of compensations is one

of the most potent in the world, and that what we lose on the normal swings, the race gains on the abnormal roundabouts. Only in cases of absolute breakdown do we want to see our human motor-cars towed into the psycho-analytic garage—a place worth visiting if only to see how Freud's discoveries are beginning to redeem those howling wildernesses of man's past ignorance, our lunatic asylums.

No. Freud as philosopher is far too infantile for our acceptance. At a great price to himself he has succeeded in bringing the world of instinct back into some sort of amicable harmony with the world of intelligence. And for that we owe him profound thanks. Sexual relations will never again return to the atmosphere of shamefaced tolerance which pervaded them throughout Western civilisation when we were young. But Freud, having discovered the roots of instinct, is as a man who cannot disentangle himself from them. While I was reading his pamphlet (it is little more), *Civilisation and its Discontents*, the figure that recurred to mind again and again was that of a prehistoric monster painfully drawing its enormous limbs out of the river-bank slime and ponderously striding in mazed distraction among the habitations of civilised man. For Freud's life-long concentration upon one aspect of life has apparently lost him many things, even as Darwin's single-mindedness is reputed to have destroyed his taste for music, and among those things which Freud has lost is the sense of beauty. "There is no very evident use in beauty," he can naively announce, "the necessity of it for cultural purposes is not apparent, and yet civilisation could not do without it." As if human consciousness without some conception of beauty were even conceivable! He can blandly describe as "phantasy pleasures" "the enjoyment of works of art", and add that "art affects us but as a mild narcotic and can provide no more than a temporary refuge from the hardships

of life" Most justly, but without the least hint of any knowledge of a life that was lived in accordance with the precept, he can describe "the ideal command to love one's neighbour as oneself" as "completely at variance with original human nature" (though he himself might be puzzled to tell us what "original" human nature was like) and can therefore dismiss the precept as culturally valueless. Naturally, he has no use for religion, which he can see only in its traditional and debased forms as compensatory other-worldliness.

In fact, Freud in the garden of this world—this place that has moved poets to such hymns in praise of it that we echo their praises if only to give ourselves the grace of fittingness to the garden—Freud in this palace of natural delight where never a day breaks but the heavens burst into blossom and never a night falls but somewhere indescribable beauty greets the eyes of men—Freud who has brought us keys to open fresh doors of the palace that stands in the garden, is himself like a creature going hideously on all-fours snuffing about among the roots of the shrubbery.

But let not the Princess despise him for this. Freud's mortal task was to establish for ever the native innocence of the human soul. He who vindicates the instinctive life gives back to the child its stolen birthright, a birthright that has been filched by those who have imposed, and still impose, self-conscious morality upon those who are without self-consciousness. The innocence which Freud would give to men they never can have till by a new birth they enter into that imaginative life wherein love of one's neighbour as oneself is not only common sense but the highest self-extension. But the innocence Freud would confer belongs by right of birth to every child, and not until we see the truth about this innocence shall we leave the company of those who "offend these little ones". To

the establishment of the principles which grant natural innocence to children, Freud has made the greatest contribution since Blake. When these principles are at last understood then perchance the instinctive life of man will no longer be twisted and contorted by "complexes", formed in childhood, which psycho-analysis strives so wearily and mechanically to remove. For ultimately the effort is in vain. Even Freud cannot reverse the wheels of time upon which our lives are spun. The attempt to do so is an attempt to unravel the pattern of life itself. But the freedom of instinct he has foreshadowed we must concede to those who are without self-consciousness. Until we concede it we knot, even in the lives of the unborn, the complexes his painful system struggles to untie.

And Freud himself? I like to think that, as in a garden once before, Beauty will kiss the lips of her monster and reveal a Prince.

OPEN LETTER TO BERTRAND RUSSELL

DEAR Mr Bertrand Russell,—In taking the liberty of addressing you personally I offer as excuse the following facts While I was awaiting a court martial for resigning my commission in the army, in 1917, I read *Political Ideals*, and it gave me a sense of personal affection for the man who could, at a time when the foundations of society were being rocked by men of mob passions, state with precision fundamental truths Then again, though I know little of your school, I believe it is founded upon certain principles of education which were first brought to my notice by my old friend Homer Lane, and anything that concerns the continuance of the work of that remarkable and most lovable man, who was so shamefully hounded by malevolent authority, must be of personal interest to me Finally, in your latest book, *The Conquest of Happiness*, you say that your favourite hymn as a child was one that begins, "Weary of earth and laden with my sin" Mine, at that period, happened to be, "Jesus bids us shine" (taught me by an aunt as she lay on what was to have been her early death-bed, only she recovered and lived to be over seventy), and from this I judge that our early experiences of happiness and unhappiness were peculiarly alike

These things, together with the fact that your book is addressed to the unlearned, give me at least the right to an opinion upon it And I confess to having found it unusually stimulating Yet I find myself quarrelling with it all along the line This is strange, because I believe profoundly in human happiness, and consider that the task of increasing the sum of it, especially among children, one of the noblest man can undertake But, the *conquest* of

happiness? Why so militant? Conquest presumes a fight between opposites, and the conquest of happiness suggests to me the belligerent exercise of just those possessive impulses which you were careful to show in your old pamphlet were the source of all our then-present woes. I cannot think about happiness in those terms. Happiness, as I conceive it, is spontaneous, or it is not happiness. To be concerned about one's personal happiness is merely to indicate the fact that we are unhappy. Happiness, in a word, is a by-product. Those who seek it always lose it. In man it is the sign of a physical and spiritual equilibrium. This may be maintained as perfectly on the level of the beast as upon the level of the sage, but it is a condition which is inevitably disturbed by any effort towards development, and since that effort is more frequently made by the sage than by the beast, wise men run the greatest risk of unhappiness.

I once knew a man who made happiness a standard of success. There came a moment when, after much suffering, he achieved what seemed to him complete happiness. Thereupon he conceived the idea that the maintenance of this condition was the prime object of his life. Immediately, of course, he had to defend himself from foes within and without that militated against this state. And a magnificent show he put up. He strangled self-pity at sight. He fought and derided misery. Day and night he thought about betterment. His friends were those who contributed happiness. His foes were those who were sad or sorry about anything. He even divided literature into plus and minus quantities, plus being all that made for the increase of happiness, and minus whatever "ached on" about human woes. In short, he lived a spartan life. But was he happy? Well, I have never known a man who achieved such agonies of unhappiness. What you describe as "ordinary day-to-day happiness" was what

he strove to conquer, and, hero though he was—the most magnificently courageous fighter I have ever seen, with health, wealth, and every material advantage to assist him—he fought the most disastrously losing battle imaginable.

You speak of distractions from sorrow and unhappiness. I am afraid I shall not contribute to your immediate happiness if I remind you of one of the favourite anodynes used by civilians in the late war. This was contained in the popular song, "Turn the dark clouds inside out Till the boys come home." I can hardly imagine that this effort to achieve the conquest of happiness gave you much comfort at the time. True enough, the boys have come home (some of them) and the clouds have assumed their normal appearance all right, but if, instead of practising all manner of self-delusion, we had as a nation faced the peace issue in 1916 (as miserable realists like you, myself, H. W. Massingham, and a few others in this country desired), we might have lost the silver lining, but I do not think we should have achieved Versailles, and Herr Hitler, and the portent he presents. We should have been faced with the unhappiness of an inconclusive war, but we should have missed the disillusion and national degradation that will make the years 1917 and 1918 the Black Years of recent history.

What appears to me the basic fallacy of your philosophy of happiness is your assumption that there is no sufficient reason why a man should not sustain the happiness of his childhood all his life. You do not appear to admit that the happiness of self-conscious adults must be altogether different in kind from the happiness of the child. In fact, I hope I do not misrepresent you in saying that you write for the express purpose of showing how childish happiness may be continued until we are in sight of the grave. Very naturally, therefore, you seek to guard yourself against the complaint of those who would object to your philosophy

on the ground that it minimises the essential causes of unhappiness, by stating that "you will not consider the great catastrophes, such as loss of all one's children, or public disgrace" For catastrophe is the point at issue—at least between you and me. Catastrophe, great or small, I define as that from without which violently upsets the equilibrium of happiness and makes an individual conscious of disharmony and isolation. To the individual, whether that catastrophe is great or small depends not upon its public magnitude, but upon the intensity of its personal effect. How, in that sense, do you define catastrophe? Is it a catastrophe if your wife or child perish by fire, battle, or sudden death, but not a catastrophe if they die young of cancer or infantile paralysis? Is the loss of "all one's children" different in kind from the loss of a single beloved child? I inquire because if your philosophy is applicable only to those who feel they have never suffered catastrophe, I am afraid it is useful to a very small number, and finally, as they approach death, to none at all.

For death (which should be meaningless to a child) is the touchstone of adult happiness. No man who has not suffered a spiritual death while in the body can face physical death without terror. If he can merely say

"I warm'd both hands before the fire of life,
It sinks, and I am ready to depart"

then he is either dead while he lives—spiritually dead—or merely shouting to keep his courage up. Must we be reduced to this? I admit it is what I observe most people doing, and you may have observed it, never more obviously than when death has laid low one in whom your heart was centred.

Death and its presentiment, pain, are the primary causes of all unhappiness. Biologically this is evident: any animal is unhappy when it is ill, and physically man is not

different But self-consciousness gives to man a task in the face of death which the animal knows nothing of, and man is man according to his conscious power of facing death If he subordinates his spirit and lapses into animal acquiescence, confining his spirit to physical necessity, then the less man he And death cannot be classed among your "great catastrophes" it is our nearest neighbour, the only certainty about life, the greatest of all disturbers of "ordinary day-to-day happiness" Man must have a philosophy equal to all the contingencies of life that may befall him, and it is for this reason that your philosophy, which may be suitable for the minor occasions of the superficial life that excludes the consideration of death, fails

Wordsworth has written the history of the child's spontaneous happiness in his great *Ode* There he shows how inevitably happiness dies, and how, and by what means, it may be raised again as joy For joy is the true end of man, not happiness "the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace" As Carlyle said "There is in man a higher than love of happiness He can do without happiness and instead thereof find blessedness" Not by burking, but by accepting, the fact of death can we ever hope to attain to that kind of happiness which is secure against "the mercy of accident" But when our personal happiness dies, if we will go down to death and suffer a spiritual death with it, without hope of resurrection and only in the certainty that if death be our lot we are ready to accept it, then, dying, we shall rise to a spiritual life that is no longer dependent for its enjoyment upon anything so precarious as personal happiness we shall lose our life to save it, and not spend our strength—as ultimately I feel you spend your strength in this book—saving our life in the sure and certain hope of losing it —Yours sincerely,

MAX PLOWMAN

THE NATURE OF MODERN WAR

WHAT do we mean by "war"?

A word of three letters does not appear to be a very formidable opponent to the human understanding, especially after it has been in common use for long, long ages, yet probably most of the confusion of modern politics is due to the fact that war stands for things infinitely various and entirely incalculable. To the minds of most people it perhaps stands for the culmination of conflict—a conflict involving everything, and therefore of a sort to which there is no determinable conclusion, so that the thought of war has literally become abysmal, and the word war has in consequence lost all definition. We speak of "the next war" while in fact there is nothing more definite in our minds than the enormous shadow of a general horror towards which we appear to be moving inevitably. "It" will "happen." Thus we speak, like creatures that have lost all effective power of volition.

But in common parlance there are all sorts of wars. We have class-war, economic-war, civil-war, capitalist-war, Fascist-war, international-war, not to speak of such euphemisms as wars of religion, the war of the sexes, and the vast progeny of conflicts which the modern psychologist regards as different species of war. Peace—the rotten best we know—is not free from aspersion. Socialists commonly assert that capitalist peace is indistinguishable from war. And we agree. But the statement is an obvious half-truth, as every Socialist who marched to the trenches in 1914 discovered to his cost. To him—physically and actually—the difference between earning munition wages and buying a piano at the week-end, and what was politely called trench-warfare, was almost (and often actually) the difference

between life and death. And we have yet to meet the theoretic Socialist who had the courage to offer as comforting intelligence to his pals at zero hour the tidings that, under capitalism, war and peace are essentially the same.

This would seem to show that, in the matter of war, intensity is not a fictitious and misleading but a real factor. Capitalism, like heat from the fire in the grate, is endurable up to a certain point on the thermometer, but the fact that we can normally live with capitalism, and with the fire, does not prove that in their intensity either will not be totally unendurable. Heated water is pleasant to wash in; but let the water boil, put the baby into it never so gently, and you may well hang for the result. And do we accept Mr Duff Cooper's assurance that he is not asking the youth of this country to take a bath of boiling oil? "The forces" sounds well, and joining them for "the defence of democracy" still better, but it takes Shadrach, Meshach, and Abednego to be flung into a fiery furnace and emerge unconsumed. There is a world of difference between the old soldier's baptism of fire and modern total immersion.

War, in fact, is not what it was, or there wouldn't be all this pother about it. So much is surely clear to the most die-hard defender of that defunct species, "the warrior", known or unknown. It no longer avails to cite precedents and to say that, because man will fight to the death for anything in which he sincerely believes, therefore "war" is inevitable. It depends what you are talking about. If you make the word war synonymous with resistance, then you may be intending truth and at the same time speaking untruth. For there are plenty of things which men who will never again take part in the activity of organised war will resist to the death, and, in their own fashion, combat in the most effective way they believe possible. The logician may say that this will inevitably involve such people either in physical cowardice or in the

utmost physical violence—that they cannot draw back from the pursuit of their aims at the point when their physical violence becomes requisite and effective. But the logician is wrong in believing it to be a matter of “drawing back.” On the contrary, the necessity is to go forward, but upon another track. The whole argument turns upon what is actually the most effective form of resistance, and upon whether there are aims and purposes for which personal violence is not merely ineffective, but completely self-defeating. whether, in fact, there is not a point at which the conflict must necessarily be raised to a higher level *in order that* it may be carried on at all.

And without more ado, and with no apology, we will cite the Crucifixion as an example. The testimony of centuries goes to show that the conflict between the Jews and Jesus ended with what was regarded by his contemporaries as the hopeless defeat of Jesus at Calvary. That was illusion. Following a policy of non-violent resistance, he had raised the conflict between himself and the religious and civil authorities above the physical level of his own personal violence to the higher level upon which the idea he had embodied became most living after he had been buried. His enemies had said in effect, “Death ends all, therefore let us destroy his physical body.” And his reply had been, not to defend his physical body, but to make manifest truth of a kind which persists—as the work and power of great artists always persists—after his body was destroyed.

The question for every Socialist now is whether the truth of Socialism, according to his perception of it, is, or is not, of this order. If he honestly believes that he can combat the armed violence of capitalism with an aimed resistance which will be effective in securing the aims for which he offers resistance, then it behoves him to apply himself to the technique of modern violence with a studious-

ness and intensity unparalleled in the history of military research and scientific rearmament—unless he is willing to fight in the certainty of defeat. But if he becomes aware that Socialism is an order of life in which, either for defence or attack, the means of modern warfare are as anachronistic as human sacrifice is anachronistic to the wedding of a King of England, then he will very stubbornly decline to be drawn into the conflict of war upon the plane of mechanised violence, precisely for the reason that he intends to make his resistance upon the effective level of essential common humanity.

Capitalism, in fact, now demands human sacrifice. In measure, of course, it always did, and always must, but it now demands it with an incinerating fury of intensity. As the pressure of necessity increases, so the intensity of the demand increases. In place of the child-slave in the mines, capitalism now requires the whole boiling of modern youth, and indeed nothing less than the living body of society, to be offered in sacrifice to its die-harder-and-harder economic principles. War has infected the body politic entire, and at the same time become a fever of such temperature that even those responsible for the conduct of war are now in consternation at the intensity it exhibits.

War was once an instinctive expression of tribal consciousness. As such it retained its primitive sanctions, but all down the centuries this instinctive sanction has been growing weaker with the growth of human consciousness and the consequent welding of the multitudinous societies of the world into one. The consciousness of this unity found expression in Marx's "Workers of the World Unite." And just in proportion as we have imaginative consciousness adequate to the actual growth of human society, we know that society is one and that the instinctive passions of tribal differentiation can no longer be truly operative in the unified body of mankind.

Therefore the truth about modern war is that it has become a horror and an abomination to be abhorred, for it is an attempt to galvanise a corpse into mechanical action. The living impulse has expired and the filthy skeleton alone responds to scientific mechanism. It has become an abstraction to which the life of man must be sacrificed in order to give it the semblance of animation. It has become something worse than a machine which he must serve, it is now an altar whereon the whole body of mankind is to be sacrificed. Even the most unperceptive of us can now perceive that while there is a limit to frightfulness in the mind of the average man, there is none in the requirement of modern war.

To discriminate between the sorts of war we might be tempted to wage, without a corresponding discrimination in the means by which any kind of war will be carried on, is to seek to distinguish between things that, in their effective action, are actually the same. Against the limit of human folly, the utmost folly is no defence. 'Tit-for-tat' is the child's response. "By their fruits shall ye know them." If the Socialist uses capitalist means for the prosecution of his war, most surely and certainly he cannot hope to avoid the nemesis of tyranny and oppression which is the natural result of capitalist war. "Blood will have blood"—as Macbeth discovered. Between civilised men, no war is now possible *except* capitalist war. The fightful thing that capitalism is, now declares itself in its last effect. Back and back the human being, seeking to defend himself against the terrors of capitalism, is driven, until at last he stands confronted with the simple question: will he, or will he not, himself employ its means, and thus embody in his own person its active principle? And there, thank God, the power of choice comes to rest and determination. For at last he can decline, and make his non-co-operation with the enormous abstract machine effective. Without him it

cannot function Without him, war, in the modern sense, cannot be At the bitter end he has discovered the actual key to the closed door of political complexity Therefore, the supreme question for the Socialist to-day is, will he dare to make use of it? Will he, daring all, dare to cut the Achilles tendon in the heel of capitalism in the very soaring act of its obscene triumph?

THE ESSENTIAL REVOLUTION

THE only name we can give to an absolute standard of values is God. It may be said that there is not, and cannot be, an absolute standard of value—that if there were, and it could be objectified, life itself would cease. And that is true if by absolute standard we mean that which is subject to reason, law and material definition. But every man's personal idea of perfection is his standard of absolute value. It is, we know, subjective, imperfect and partial. But how do we know that? Only by means of a higher concept of perfection—a perfection not subject to personal partiality. God is the infinite of that higher concept which to realise as an infinity is the only freedom the soul can understand. Every man's standard of perfection is God for him, and because man is *one* in love and brotherhood and not *many*, all standards of perfection converge to a focal point and only find complete validity when they reach it. That focal point is the standard of absolute perfection for which the soul labours in travail until it has conceived.

It is from the released consciousness that has attained the idea of an absolute standard of value that a true appreciation of comparative values proceeds—a paraphrase of the saying, "If the truth shall make you free, then are ye free indeed." All our values must be based on a criterion of value, or for want of a scale of comparison they will cease to be values. God is not merely a personal but a social necessity, for society is built according to an ordered scale of values. Paradoxical and irreverent as it may sound, God is the only thing we can all be in agreement about. Let us therefore, at all costs, attain to this point of agreement. Let us establish one, basic, cardinal item of truth—hold to it as dearer than life, and see what happens.

The deep-seated cause of our modern spiritual neurosis is the fact that men have lost the sense of any blessed thing about which they can all agree, and the diversity of men is such that God alone can be that object. If God were not, man would have to invent him in order to find a genuine basis for society, for everything that is created must be created in the image of something else. Society is made in the image of individual man, and according to the same order, man is made in the image of God. Man cannot choose himself as image for the creation of himself, except to his own damnation. And this is the condemnation of our modern God-oblivious society—the curse of Sodom—that it begets itself in the image of self-love. Over one hundred years ago William Blake warned us against this idolatry which he called “the hermaphroditic blasphemy.”

But the blessedness of spiritual dawn is that it breaks upon darkest night, and there is reason to believe that spiritually darkest night is upon us. The fact that we have reached an end is not now the mere cry of the preacher. It is borne in upon us by a thousand successive events and by premonitory rumblings that presage earthquake. The necessity of a new way of life is megaphoned in our ears by a hundred voices. The statesmen in international council, whose business we now make it to patch old garments and pour new wine into old bottles, appeal to us for the signs of faith and confidence without which, they protest, they have no power to create new conditions of life. All they can now do is to reiterate our good intentions. And we, for our part, respond by re-echoing their appeal. We assure them with all possible emphasis that as individuals we much prefer peace, amity and co-operation, to war in any shape, whether national, civil or financial, and we trust they will speedily achieve the former on our behalf. They hear the plaintive echo and are powerless. Neither party can move. “Those behind cry forward, and those before

cry back " There is deadlock because neither politicians nor people can appeal decisively to any authority for higher sanctions And the point is that nothing less than religious sanctions could be appealed to And they are now totally ineffective They are unrecognised *In the actual, effective proceedings of nations they do not exist* Meantime all parties shout for self-advantage, and hope for peace and concord, in plain defiance of the fact that war in principle is self-advantage in act

When we look at what actually happens, when we see what really determines the decisions of nations at the present time, what higher sanctions do we find acknowledged than rapacious self-seeking and the law of the Devil take the hindmost? Where are the old sanctions, feeble as they were? Dead Buried with yesterday's religion regarded as belonging to the indulgences of idealism and the illusions of Christian missionary enterprise The up-to-date appeal—the thing that goes—is the appeal to scientific realism—to the numbering of the heads that count—to prudent alliance of oneself and one's nation with might, however disposed Moral principle? As between men hungry for all possible gains to be obtained in any given situation, what is it at its very highest but "the thing done"? So the gentleman's code becomes the highest word of moral principle, and since gentlemen can no longer afford the manners of gentlemen except upon a personally advantageous cash basis, the moral principle becomes that of unacknowledged might disguised with a moral mask To this it is driven by the sternest logic.

Meantime, the outcry against this inevitable nemesis goes on It re-echoes from people to politicians and from politicians to people The cry is ever, "Yours, partner" Each passes the bluff, bandying responsibility like a tennis ball, and the redeeming deed is never done Fear becomes the irresistible force, and war the immovable object Why?

There is a deep-seated reason. It is this. When man looks at man with the scientific eye, he sees him, in Tom Hood's words, "very plain". He sees him as pure object, without subjective relationship. He sees him in a state of suspended animation as a thing. He sees him, as Blake said, "with, not through the eye", and Blake did not err when he said

"We are led to believe a lie
When we see with, not through the eye"

For what we see in pure objectivity without subjective relationship we see in fact as dead. There is no life in the scientific eye. It is a pure mirror, and what appears *in the mirror* is dead. But when we see something *as dead*, subjective relationship inevitably awakens to the belief that it *is* dead, and compels us either to utilise this dead thing, or to move it out of our way. And the other fellow, seeing us with the same eye, is, by the same compulsive logic, ultimately compelled to the same resolve. Man thus becomes the natural enemy of man, and were it possible for all men everywhere to see each other only with the scientific eye (or what perhaps is more recognisable, with the eye of that cold realism which is everywhere accepted as the true eye and is related to what is called "the logic of plain fact") every man would, by inevitable law, be impelled to destroy his neighbour until mankind was reduced to a suicidal unit. And this Blake also saw when he wrote: "For he who will not live by love must be subdued by fear."

We have come to the end of pure realism. We have tried it out, and its insufficiency now stares us in the face. We have come to the end, and we cannot act powerfully in any other way until we realise that we have come to the end. *Laisser faire* no longer works. "We are all Socialists now"—if only we could agree about what Socialism is. That at least would give form to a new order, as it is, we have to go rushing about giving Socialist patches to the old individualist garment, and now that Socialism will keep

breaking in, Capitalism becomes subterranean. The economic system crawls on its beastly belly, supply kicks the beam while artificial restoratives are being pumped into demand *insecurity*—of wealth, of life, of government—is everywhere the recurrent nightmare in a world whose motto is "*Safety First*." Truly we have come to an end. We have worn the old garment of indefinite material progress utterly threadbare, and if we cannot see our own rags and tatters it is only because we have drawn them so tightly about our chilling limbs. Surely the War was writing on the sky big enough for any man to read. Or must the whole heaven turn to brass?

We have made a League of Nations, but the moral conscience of the world will not support it. Why? Because every nation is living wholly according to the principle of self-interest, and it is impossible to form a judiciary with power to impose the principle of *common* interest upon states relying upon the principle of *self-interest* and nothing else. The attempt is the attempt to get a silk purse out of a sow's ear. So that when nations like Japan, Germany and Italy give a sailor's farewell to the League, or Russia joins it, we are surprised and shocked only if our idealism is purely sentimental, and we believe that people can act nationally and individually as wolves, and internationally and collectively as new-born lambs.

What is the moral? That we have come to the end of the old way of life, that we have got to discover and set in motion a new way of life before we can hope to provide an organisation like the League of Nations with power to act. Anything else is really farcical. And in the creation of this new way of life we have got to begin at the very beginning with our own individual regeneration. The formation of organisations, political bodies, religious bodies, social bodies is not enough. The trouble goes deeper. The essential revolution must happen in ourselves.

THE PACIFIST LINE

DURING the days of the crisis in international affairs, which became dangerous in the middle of last month and at the moment of writing continues to be terribly critical, the offices of the Peace Pledge Union were reported to be ringing with telephone calls from people wanting to know "what line the P P U was taking"

If the moment had been less serious the best answer might have been "Not the Green Line" For such a question ought not to have been possible to a serious pacifist, savouring as it does of political stunting, or of the tactics of the theoretical Marxist whose only joy is his unending search for "the correct line" Because the truth is that pacifism has never been on the political line Revolutionary changes must occur before anything like a pacifist political policy can be honestly formulated

The reason is clear, for an elementary understanding of pacifism recognises that the means by which national policies are habitually safeguarded is by the threat of armed force Pacifism, which implies the refusal to use the policy of war, or the policy of the threat of war, cannot take part in the formulation of national policy *so long as* war and the threat of war remain an indispensable part of national policy That they *are* an indispensable part is the plain truth concerning every national government in the world Pacifist political policy could only *begin* in a community that had actually renounced war as an instrument of policy Take organised war out of the realm of national possibility, and pacifist political policy immediately comes into operation, but until then it is as sensible for pacifists to talk about distinctively *pacifist* political policy as it would be for a man

to board a non-stop train to Brighton in the hope of getting to Arcady. The line, as laid down, simply does not go there, and pacifists hanging on to the communication cord should be warned that they will only have to pay.

Pacifism implies recognition of the fact that along the political line as laid down there is nothing to expect in the long run but crashing disaster. And it is of the utmost importance that we should try to understand why this is so, for unless we can see the reasons for the complete failure of modern politics we shall inevitably drift back into seeking salvation by political means, in spite of the fact that our acceptance of pacifism is in itself an admission that we can see every political line leading to the immeasurable disaster of war.

The underlying hopelessness of politics is due to the fact that the divorce between politics and religion has now become complete. Blake's aphorism "Religion is Politics and Politics is Brotherhood" now expresses the exact contrary of what we see around us. Such religion as we have is definitively understood by power and authority—even within the Church—to be that which is not political. As for Brotherhood, we have only to imagine what sort of a response the ideologists of both Left and Right would make to the appeal to Brotherhood *as politics*, to know that whatever else modern politics may be, it is certainly not Brotherhood. In this connection, how instructive it is to observe that the man who most distinctively has shown that he believes "Religion is Politics and Politics is Brotherhood" was compelled to resign from the leadership of the political opposition when he felt the compulsion to implement his creed. George Lansbury, preaching religion all over Europe, stands outside the sphere of effective politics; for, as now conducted, politics is insusceptible of religion: its business is conducted outside the religious pale, and the attempt to base any political action upon the most simple

religious truth is regarded by the ordinary work-a-day politician as pathetic unpracticality

The process by which this state of things has come about has been slow but sure. It is of course inherent in the whole modern capitalist economy, which serves Mammon and, so far from attempting to serve God, is now failing to serve even capitalist man, for it fails—through its entire devotion to the security of property—to give him normal security of life. Even the best-directed bombs of mindless men may gang a-gley. Hence, the desire to avoid war in all quarters save those where people dwell “whom the vile blows and buffets of the world have so incensed that they are reckless what they do to spite the world”

“WAITING FOR HITLER” was the amazing and incriminating poster that filled the public eye at the height of the crisis. “*Facilis descensus*” To such a pitch of patient expectancy has post-war political diplomacy brought us that an entire Continent stands waiting upon the word of a man whose word he himself has informed us is not to be relied on. British and French post-war diplomacy has been the means of elevating this political desperado to his appalling eminence. Waiting for Hitler is the true and legitimate end of a policy which began with the exhortation of a British politician “Beat them to the knees”

Such is politics in 1938. Pacifism is, among other things, the resistance which religion—no matter how unconscious, elementary, or resentful of its own name—makes to politics that are without vision, without morals and ultimately without hope. Its best and most effective exponent at the moment is that war veteran, Pastor Niemöller.

But in plainly asserting that political action is not the pacifist line, we do not mean to imply that pacifists are merely quietists whose interests are supposed to be purely personal and who take it as foreordained that their rôle is to permit the modern Juggernaut to pass over them in

silence That is the caricature which persons with an obsessional belief in the part they have to play in politics are fond of making Nothing could be further from the truth We who are pacifists need to be more socially alive than the rest of the community, and the only reason for preaching pacifism and witnessing to it, in season and out, is this sense of the actuality of human brotherhood and deep understanding of the truth that "we are members one of another" Pacifism is a faith based on the reality of the unity of human society and the understanding that we are all integral members of it, and it is on this ground that the need for strictly pacifist activity is always with us Pacifism is only negative in its resistance to those who deny this affirmation The pacifist who begins to inquire what line he ought to take at a moment of political crisis stands self-condemned his past experience should have determined his present line What has he been doing to justify his existence as a pacifist during the past twelve months?

Alas, there is hardly one of us who can answer that question without a sense of shame—that is, if we have had any imaginative understanding of the necessity with which we have been confronted True, most of us have been engaged in pacifist activity of a kind But what a kind, in what a world! Keats's willingness to "jump down Etna in a good cause" has hardly been in our line We have preferred less distinctive and less demonstrative forms of activity, and these have become at last so safe, so tame and so ineffective that they fail to demonstrate intensity of conviction We stand in danger of being publicly regarded as an amiable and negligible sect.

MODERN PACIFISM AND THE PEACE PLEDGE UNION

WHAT is the real history of the great pacifist movement that has sprung up in this country within the past few years?

It is hard to set a term to any slowly evolving change of public mind, but those whose memories go back to the Jameson Raid and the "little Englanders" and "pro-Boers" of the South African War will reflect that war began to lose caste in this country at the beginning of the century. Ostensibly Joseph Chamberlain won his imperialist campaign, but it may be argued that Henry Campbell-Bannerman better expressed the change of public mind when, by his acts of conciliation, he showed that the Boer War ought never to have been fought.

Then came the crash of 1914. To say that there was reluctance in this country to engage in that war is to understate the case. To the people at large the war appeared as a desperate effort of resistance to German militarism which, if not withstood, would repeat the triumph of 1870 and then overrun this country. The effort to prevent this was therefore very easily represented first as a defensive war and then as "a war to end war", and Kitchener's Army was chiefly composed of men who joined it under the constraint of that idealism. They fully believed they were fighting as democrats to resist a power that worshipped Might as Right and was, in all essentials, the contemporary counterpart of what is now known as Fascism.

It is these men whom I see as the real forebears of modern pacifism. Most of them were killed. Thousands of them died on July 1st, 1916, when men with bayonets and hand-grenades pitted themselves pretty hopelessly against a fully

mechanised and scientifically organised system of defence. Indeed, the struggle on July 1st was symbolic and premonitory—it showed the nature of modern war and the change that had come upon it. It was the plain proof that, on the amoral plane, organised Might will always be stronger than democratic Right, and that a democratic army will not prove the contrary. The idea of a war to end war died that day, when the flower of Kitchener's Army was destroyed. It ought to be marked on the Calendar as "The Slaughter of the Idealists." But there, I believe, the seed of modern pacifism was sown, for what the modern pacifist represents is not defeatism but simply the consciousness that can learn by experience. And the pacifist of 1930 knows that the war of 1914-18 ought never to have been fought. He knows by the experience of the Great War that no Right is inherent in war, that the consent of the governed is the true strength of law, that the force of arms destroys but does not maintain law, and that to rely upon force to uphold law is to rely upon a reed that bends and breaks in the hand.

As an activity war degenerated inevitably after 1916—it passed from the heroic to the blackguardly, it sank to an obscene contest between mechanised conscripts—obscene in its ruthlessness and sub-human in its mechanisation. The spirit had died out of it and it functioned as a compulsive machine which no one had the power to control or the wit to stop. It finished itself in influenza, Armistice Day, the Treaty of Versailles and a League of (some of the) Nations, and even to say that it ended with these is to travesty the truth, for what happened in Austria and Germany was that the economic war took over the mechanism and then perpetrated its greatest atrocities upon women and children.

But when the guns ceased firing there ensued in England a wearied torpor that passed for peace. The morally sick

and the physically sore wanted rest above all things, and they got it as the worn-out usually get it—by shutting their eyes. They shut them so effectively that the consequences of winning the war were unseen for years. At last we have opened them again—to see all that is now happening in Europe as consequential.

But after the war, the moral idealism that had first expressed itself in a war for democracy was conserved in the idea of the League of Nations. The thousands of people in this country who joined the L N U honestly believed that they were supporting peace on the basis of international justice, and that this democratic support of the League was all that was required of them. Slowly they have been undeceived, but it was not until the League began to show signs of its impotence that the people of this country began to think fundamentally about war. When they did, modern pacifism was born, for its advocates realised that the League had failed, despite its great and worthy intentions, because it had assumed a responsibility it could not take, a responsibility that ultimately belonged to the individual. The League, in fact, had always been the unconscious means whereby individual responsibility could be evaded. Just as no one nation among the Allies had been responsible for the universally disastrous collapse of Austria and Germany after the war, so no individual member of the L N U had any responsibility for the prevention of war. The League was the great scapegoat of responsibility. The L N U was a church which offered its members absolution without the necessity of confession, indeed, its members could actually obtain absolution from responsibility for war by expressing themselves as willing to take part in a war of "collective security" even though it might turn out to be nothing more than a fight to maintain the balance of power.

It was to clear the air of this poisonous moral ambiguity

that the late Canon H R L Sheppard wrote his famous letter to the Press. What was the reason for its instantaneous success?

I think this lay in its sweet reasonableness. It was not directed to cranks, nor made exclusively to social, political or religious reformers. It was essentially a sympathetic, common-sense appeal to ordinary Englishmen on the ground of their decent humanity. Didn't they think that the time had come when organised war should be regarded as a crime against mankind in which no self-respecting individual ought to take part? It went right to the heart of the matter by insisting upon individual responsibility and demanding its recognition, it was, in fact, a common-sense call to repentance by a couple of public men, one of whom had been a padre at the Front in 1915, while the other, Brig-Gen F P Crozier, was a regular soldier who had achieved high rank in the Army through his ability and outstanding bravery. In many respects they were distinctly men of the world, very unlike the popular conception of the conscientious objector in that they both had a background of highly honoured public service, indeed, they were good representatives of religious and civil agreement upon the futility and abomination of modern war.

The movement was thoroughly in the liberal and humane tradition of the country, historically in the line with its appeal to the common conscience, but new in its social awareness. In this respect it differed radically from the old war-resistant leagues of those who disclaimed, often stridently, their own social responsibility for war. This difference (obscured by the wording of a pledge *necessarily* negative) was in fact fundamental, for whereas the conscientious objector of the past had placed the whole burden of responsibility for war upon the Government or the social and economic order, the modern pacifist recognised his own responsibility, accepted the burden of bringing

about a social change, and as a sign of his acceptance of this responsibility, pledged himself *as a social unit* to the renunciation of war. There is a wide difference between the will to *resist* war and the decision to *renounce* it, for he who renounces an activity judges himself, whereas he who resists an activity passes judgment upon others. If I renounce war, that will very speedily involve me in the necessity of endeavouring to create a new social harmony, whereas if I merely resist war, no such consequence is implied. I may merely resist in the socially-blind belief that general resistance is all that is required to secure peace.

The modern pacifist is under no such delusion. His pacifism—just because it demands of him the acceptance of personal responsibility—is the outcome of social consciousness which expresses itself in a concern for social order that overruns the frontiers of nationalism as naturally as every activity of man now struggles to get past these traditional, obstructive barriers. Pacifism is the effort of the modern social consciousness to be adequate to the historic situation by breaking down the barriers of national exclusiveness, traditional fear and anti-social greed, in order to attain that old democratic objective, the federation of mankind.

Therefore it must be insisted that however revolutionary or idealistic pacifism may be considered, it is not negative. It asks for sacrifice by the individual on behalf of society as a whole. It asks him as an individual to surrender the power of armed force, recognising that every individual, whatever his political ideology, cannot rid himself of the power to exercise choice. It asks him to take the first step towards the redemption of society from complete disaster, a first step that has nothing whatever to do with individualist perfectionism. As modern war is totalitarian its antithesis must be individual, for only by an explicit expression of intention by individuals can we even begin to create a

pacifist society, and the first step is the simple one that individuals should decide to stop murdering one another, come what may. Whether in defiance of the creeds of Communism and Fascism, Pacifism will succeed in asserting the validity of the individual, remains to be seen, but so long as one pacifist remains alive disbelieving in the necessity of war, pacifism will survive and human personality along with it. The truism that war has invaded the home should teach us that war cannot be eradicated by any change of political forms, however necessary, and that the seeds of war are in the human breast. If man is to rid himself of war the resolution must come from within himself. To-day each one of us is confronted by his *own* inhuman destructive power. It is optional to us whether we turn this power from its present course into creative channels or not. We cannot serve Peace *and* War. Nor, for that matter, can Mr Chamberlain.

This in exposition and defence of the pacifism generally associated with the Peace Pledge Union. I turn hastily to criticism of its activity during the past eighteen months, choosing that period because it was in October, 1937, that the P P U suffered something very like calamity in the death of its founder. So long as Canon Sheppard was alive, pacifism in the P P U was very much alive and intent upon pursuing an increasingly creative purpose. It still is, yet there can be little doubt that the movement as a whole has suffered more than its share of the difficulties that ensue upon the loss of a great leader.

Let us be plain about one thing. These difficulties are not due to the loss of a pacifist fuhrer. The idea is, of course, nonsensical, for democratic leadership is one thing and Fascist leadership is another. The effect of the first is the free expression of activity. The effect of the second is slavery. The truly democratic leader draws men to him by the common cords of love for human freedom and

equality: the Fascist leader draws men into his service by the common bonds of fear and hatred in order to institute enforced and compulsive order. Not leadership but compulsion is "Fascist", but our democracy has yet to cease from being so bemused with its own conceit that it will not trust anything but the plainest reflection of its own face in the mirror. True democratic leadership is at once completely representative and compulsive of human affection. Such was Dick Sheppard's of the pacifist movement, and as such it was a model of democratic leadership.

When Dick Sheppard died, leadership as it had been so joyfully experienced in the P P U came to an end. Not because he had not shown his followers the way. His way was Marxist in its realism. At every point in the development of the historic situation his policy was one of appropriate pacifist action. He knew by instinct the changing nature of the situation and the need for immediate activity on any section of the pacifist front where public opportunity was afforded. Moreover, he implanted in the minds of all who had the humility to learn from him some understanding of the kind of response which changing circumstance was likely to call forth and—more than this—he infused them with a moiety of that generosity, adventurousness and irrepressible activity which had lifted his efforts above the grey, passive and often self-righteous immobility of the time-honoured war-resister.

Two courses were therefore open to the movement after Dick Sheppard's death. One, of belief that his spirit had so infused itself into the body of the movement that it could be trusted to carry on with its own momentum, leaving the question of leadership to resolve itself through the general activity. The other, to recognise the incomparable loss which the movement had actually suffered, to harbour resources, to consolidate the responsible personnel, and to

substitute for leadership some form of orthodox democratic control.

The argument for the second of these courses proved irresistible. Dick Sheppard was dead. Respect for what he had been implied recognition of the fact that the contrast between a leader living and a leader dead was absolute. By the measure he had been dynamic, by that measure was dynamic obviously lacking. It appeared to be a practical necessity, therefore, to put the movement into reverse *out of respect for* the greatness of his leadership. Where he had been liberal it was incumbent upon the Union to be conservative. Where he had been generous it was necessary to be prudent. Where he had encouraged the widest freedom of action it was now necessary to exercise close supervision and by corporate resolution to set the seal of orthodoxy upon all and sundry pronouncements purporting to speak of pacifism in the name of the P P U.

But what has never been faced, and what the P P U must realise sooner or later, is that—prudent or not—the policy of self-defence, retrenchment and conformity which has governed the organisation for over a year is the opposite policy to that pursued by its founder. The search for pacifist orthodoxy has, of course, been vain, futile, and self-defeating. Pacifism is essentially an active faith seeking and finding appropriate expression according to the social, political, and religious activity of the society through which it works like leaven. Its policy—its whole policy—is peace. How it acts in order to achieve that end is a purely tactical matter to be determined from hour to hour according to the nature of the situation as presented in the flow of current events.

When pacifism ceases to be this and to act thus it balloons into pure idealism. It may set forth its principles in a manifesto, but a public raw with the hurt of a Spanish war will regard that manifesto as a balloon to catch star-gazers.

and ask—quite reasonably—whether pacifism has an ear for the women and children of Spain crying against starvation.

Similarly, the general public, which pacifist policy is concerned to awaken, is not concerned to know whether individual pacifists will or will not take part in A R P. or accede to the requirements of a National Register. But they are concerned to know whether pacifists realise the implications of the Munich Pact. They are interested to see what corporate pacifist witness implies. And if it implies jubilation over Mr Chamberlain's achievement, but no effective protest against a deal whereby men whose only crime is their loyalty to political democracy are doomed to death or a worse fate because of British "pacifist" action—then the general public will soon be asking grievous and highly pertinent questions about the state of pacifist morality.

These instances are cited as symptomatic of a *regressive* tendency which is totally foreign to the original movement. The need among pacifists is that they should bestir themselves and instigate pacifist action of the type Dick Sheppard took when he offered to preach pacifism in Germany or fly over to Madrid in the pursuit of peace. For folly, in the long run, will be condoned and forgiven the pacifist, but not self-complacency, self-regard, social indeterminacy and half-hearted uncertainty of response to pacifist occasion. There is a world to win. We cannot do it—we cannot take a step towards it except by making a succession of day to day responses to the opportunities of demonstrating by action the nature and purpose of pacifism.

What we as pacifists have to accuse ourselves of during the past year is lack of faith, and with it, of course, want of vision. Safety First seems to have been our motto, and it is the worst of all possible mottoes for the pacifist either within the movement or in the world at large. In the multitude of counsellors there may not want wisdom of a

sort, but Caution will always get the last word, and when fearfulness and the calculations of dubiety are esteemed as the last word of wisdom, then it is good-bye to pacifist action. The P P U is a movement—it must retain its power of movement or die, and die it surely will if it turns itself from a movement into an organisation. Pacifists must realise that they have nothing at all to learn from those who have converted movements into organisations in the past. To fulfil its object pacifism must become a universal creed, and to do this it must suffer the paradox of being willing to lose its life to save it—it must never dissociate itself from the world of politics on the one hand or religion on the other—it must reject the temptation to all self-conscious concern for its own truth and purity. For the P P U was never designed to be the home of a lost cause or the refuge of an intransigent minority. Its purpose is nothing less than to show the world the way to peace, and for this very reason leadership is essential to its existence. We need to distinguish clearly between the revolutionary situation in which we stand and a condition suitable to the static methods of ordinary democratic representation. What is required for quick movement is something other than what is required for the maintenance of a *status quo*, and only through a leadership which accepts responsibility, retains the initiative and is continuously active in new and unforeseeable paths are pacifists going to make any considerable dent in the general mass of timid inertia. The P P U has spent some portion of the past year in the endeavour to convert itself into an incorporated company of discreet advisers and business managers. Let it forget management and, borrowing a slogan from its opponents, get a move on.

NATIONAL OR INTERNATIONAL SERVICE?

WAS it merely a coincidence that the proposals for reform in our treatment of criminals should have come before the House of Commons at the time when its members were most fiercely concerned with the demonstrations against the Jews in Germany?

In this country the old penal laws have been made to look rather silly in the light of modern psychology. By its aid we have learnt that anti-social behaviour is not spontaneously generated in the mind of an original sinner, but is a natural reaction in one who has never been allowed to find a place in society. By studying human reactions, we have learnt that conditions determine growth, and that it is when people are condemned to the condition of outcasts from society that they acquire the habit of responding as outcasts and of preying upon society, to its hurt. A fairly obvious conclusion when you do come to think of it.

Similarly we have observed, in the nursery and elsewhere, that harsh treatment of wrong-doers is not the way of their reformation, also that society does not succeed in protecting itself against criminals by threats of violence or by repressive measures of physical or mental torture. And gradually we are learning, as a scientific fact, that the most respectable among us—politicians, judges, magistrates, detectives, and policemen—speak the bare truth when they say of any criminal "There, but for the grace of God, go I." Consequently, it is only sense and nature to dissent from barbarous forms of penal cruelty that seemed just and right half a century ago.

Sir Samuel Hoare's sensible proposals will doubtless have to run the gauntlet of the die-hards who disguise their personal fear with the mask of prudence and discover "weakness" in every humane action, but the sociological

facts are against them, and the Bill before Parliament promises to make up some of the leeway between ascertained psychological fact and the worst superstitions about prison treatment

Criminals at home what about criminals abroad? Are they creatures of spontaneous generation? The Government which finds it wise to explore new methods of dealing with delinquents at home might be expected to have sense enough to see that the principles governing human relations are universal in their application and do not go into reverse when they are applied to nations. The House of Commons, however, seemed to think that individual criminals needed ameliorative treatment, but that criminal nations need war.

Instead of seeing the persecution of the Jew as Hitler's means of reviving the antagonism against Germany (which he has always needed and used as the indispensable background to the entire Nazi myth) and as his easiest method of retaining the whip-hand over his own people, we appear to have reacted exactly as Hitler intended. We seem to have decided that Germany's acts being criminal they necessitate the immediate conversion of this country into a military camp. And by so deciding, had we desired to make things easy for Hitler, we could not possibly have chosen a better way. He will, of course, respond in kind and paint the fear of external enemies in more lurid colours than ever. Our present effort to turn the entire British nation into an army *ought* to give Germany cause to fear our intentions. Tyranny will batten upon the fear thus created until fear becomes desperate and the explosion of European war takes place. So, if we truly want war, we are going the right way to get it.

The simple truth is that if we completely identify Germany with Hitler, if we believe that no dissociation is possible and have no more faith in the German people and their desire for peaceful international relations than we

have in Hitler and his aims, then war on a European scale is certain, and Europe falls into an abyss whose bottom no one can even guess. If violence is merely to beget violence, the end is certain. It will create such a heaped-up violence as will spell the ruin of Europe in bloody anarchy.

We stand at the cross-roads to-day, for this persecution of the Jews has put before this country the opportunity of a moral gesture of a kind and of an order and upon a scale which might change the whole course of history if we accepted it and grasped it with sufficient courage. If, instead of fixing our gaze upon the régime which has made this intensification of cruelty possible, we could open our hearts to its victims, quite unpredictable consequences of good might ensue. Obviously the whole refugee problem calls for statesmanship even greater, but of the kind that has not been seen in this country since the days of Henry Campbell-Bannerman. These refugees are the plain evidence of the breakdown of government by autonomous national sovereignties: they are the outcasts of a corrupt social disorder which creates outcasts in the process of maintaining its own rotten economy. They are the human surplus-goods of capitalist nationalism. They represent in human terms the goods excluded by the national tariff. They are the inevitable and enormous waste product that goes hand in hand with an increasingly wealthy few and an increasingly impoverished many. Like our own unemployed, like the coffee that is burnt and the herrings tipped back into the sea, they represent the unwanted of national capitalism, and a State that was as logical in all its acts as it is in its economic practice would treat this surplus population precisely as it treats its surplus herrings.

That is practically what Germany has done. It has first netted and then tipped crates of unwanted human beings over its borders.

What should be the response of those countries that

profess to believe in the democratic principle which puts life before wealth and humanity before caste or race?

Clearly, to open wide their arms and accept these people *at all costs*—The revolution in our economic system which such a deed would entail is precisely the revolution we Europeans must undergo as the only alternative to the anachic revolution of European war. If we want to prove to the world that the British Empire is what it professes to be—a commonwealth of free people—here is the golden opportunity. The essence of totalitarianism is its exclusiveness: if democracy is its real contrary, its essence will be shown in its inclusiveness. Just in so far as we fail to find a place within the British Empire for these refugees we shall show the world that we too are in process of becoming poisoned by the cancerous disease that claims for caste or wealth the exclusive right of life.

Even for the sake of the reaction which such a human gesture would have upon the people of the totalitarian countries, is it not overwhelmingly worth making? Germany is in chains, and her people are not all such fools as not to know it. They have endured their restrictions and confinement because they had reason to believe that nothing else would bring them the bare security of life. What could persuade them that their time of servitude was over, and that for their own safety and well-being they must rid themselves of what has become a menace, like the sight of the wholesale acceptance of their outcasts by this country? Even the beast will follow the lie of good pasture. If democratic freedom were made a reality in this country, would the enslaved look on and rejoice in their slavery?

“A great wave of generosity or a great wave of death.” The sands are fast running out, but we might even now give heed to D. H. Lawrence’s warning. Never were its terms more applicable than they are in the matter of these innocent hunted thousands. The wave of death has already

begun to flow—in Abyssinia, in Spain, in China, in Palestine. If we want to stem it, if we don't want to be engulfed by it, we must meet it with a great wave of generosity. We need to act generously for our *own* sakes. A great act of national generosity would liberate the wan and pinched soul of the nation that peeped out at the time of the pact of Munich but now is again baffled to know what we can do but spread an incipient Woolwich Arsenal over every cranny and corner of the land. How many years is it since General Smuts advised a magnanimous gesture? Here is the chance of making one on a scale commensurate with the demand of necessity. Granted that it would be an act of faith—a great act of faith is just what we want to give scope to the impulse to human generosity that now lies waiting release within us. As Mr Garvin truly said, the people of this country are “not self-starters” on the conscript road that leads to gas-masks in the house, dug-outs in the garden, trenches in the parks, and security in the cemeteries. We are grimly and grimly depressed by the fear-laden atmosphere that hangs its pall of hate-full fog above us year in year out. Dimly we know that it is as true of nations as of men that “the just shall live by faith” and that therefore an act of faith is demanded of us. But faith is not a planned policy. Prove the consequences of heroic action before it is taken, and nothing that has the redeeming virtue of generosity will ever be done. And it is because this country is sick to death of unheroic, wary, artful, cautious, selfish policy that exasperated generous men go and get killed in foreign wars, or shout for policies they hope will at least clear the air of stifling political subterfuge. Translate their frustration into the unrecognised need for an act of human generosity, made in the assurance of good faith, and we shall liberate our own prisoners of hope as well as the imprisoned victims of false nationalism.

These refugees are the acid test upon anyone professing

the pacifist faith For who can suppose that peace worth the name is to be found while pacifists and social democrats a few miles away cannot find where to live outside a concentration camp? Are we as pacifists entitled to disown all responsibility for the lives of those who—by refraining from war last September—secured our peace? Are they no charge upon us? Are we to buy peace at the price of their lives, or of all that makes their lives worth living? Perish the thought Let such pacifism go to the hell of selfishness which begot it Pacifism is the implication of a real belief in human brotherhood—or it is the disgusting cowardice of the man who does not care who sinks so long as he swims And by the demand on the British Government made by pacifists in this country for humane and generous treatment to these refugees will the quality and worth of British pacifism make itself known.

The fight for democracy is always the fight for the bottom-dog To-day the only way the British worker can fight for the proletariat and hope to win is by defending the actual lives of the downtrodden and oppressed everywhere—in Europe as well as in Britain Anti-Fascism, being a negation, can only turn itself into the perfect likeness of the thing it fights Charity, being a positive, is creative of the thing it desires The secret of democracy to-day is to be found in the Parable of the Good Samaritan. Let the workers of this country bind up the wounds that Fascism has made in the international body of mankind, and the very nature of democracy will be newly revealed Democracy will regain its lost initiative and the fundamental truth of human brotherhood be asserted in the only way it can be asserted—by deliberate action Pacifism will show by action that it is not a negation but an international faith that expresses itself in works

The choice before us to-day is between National Service for War or International Service for Peace.

THE CHOICE BEFORE US

MAN feels compelled to wage war when the conditions of peace become intolerable. Expressed in the simplest terms that is the obvious reason why this country and France are at war with Germany. The conditions of peace were that Poland should surrender certain territories handed over to her by the Allies at the end of the last war, chiefly at the expense of Germany and Russia. But such a peace would have appeared last August as a yielding to pure *force majeure*, because the German demand, having been declined by Poland, had become peremptory. British honour would have been destroyed by any failure to implement her pledges to Poland, German prestige would have been destroyed if her promises to German Danzig and the German inhabitants of the Polish corridor were unfulfilled. So Germany proceeded to make good her pledges by waging war on Poland, and Britain and France declared war on Germany.

So it seems now. How it will appear in ten years' time it is fruitless to speculate, but just as the Great War no longer appears to us as a fight to preserve the integrity of Belgium, so we may be sure that the simple resolution which satisfies the majority of people in this country at the present time will appear vastly more complex when history insists that the whole story shall be told.

Most necessarily the civilians of a country waging modern war are obliged to submit to a black-out. So far as foreign policy was concerned, that black-out overtook all but a handful of people in this country ten days before the fateful news that war was inevitable was made known. Since the declaration of war, the necessities of the censorship have been such that during its first fortnight there was

practically no news of any military importance other than that relating to the immediate fate of Poland. So far as the mass of the people is concerned, modern war has to be waged in the dark, and, as every householder in Britain knows, the more imminent the danger the greater the necessity of making the black-out complete. The grim irony of the situation is expressed in the fact that at the present time the inhabitants of San Francisco probably know more about the progress of the war than the people of London.

War becomes inevitable when peace becomes intolerable. In the face of such logic, where does the pacifist stand? Plainly in the position of contending that peace never becomes intolerable. Real peace never is, but the ability to tolerate what passes for peace depends of course upon the power of toleration. What is sufferable by one person is insufferable to another. The complete pacifist is he who is prepared to suffer the loss of all things for the sake of peace. Does that include honour? Most assuredly not, and for this simple reason. Honour cannot be sacrificed by peace nor defended by war. This proposition, though it now seems to be false, will, by the war that is now being waged, be proved to be true.

But such a proposition does not say that honour is the inevitable concomitant of any condition which is not actually war, or that dishonour is unavoidable in war. Honour is relative to human personality and its consciously undertaken obligations. It is commonly recognised in any man who is "as good as his word." But the word of a murderer is not made honourable by his fulfilment of it, nor is his honour tarnished if he fails to fulfil a promise to murder. From which we see that honour cannot adhere to a personally dishonourable man, or to put it in its simplest terms, an evil tree cannot bring forth good fruit. And ends must be according to means. It is

impossible to pursue honour by dishonourable means. That "peace" is always honourable is quite untrue, that "a good war"—or the fulfilment of a contract evil in itself—can confer honour is equally untrue. The contract itself must be honourable if its fulfilment is to confer honour.

Peace had become intolerable to the majority of the people of this country when Mr Chamberlain declared war on Germany. But that deplorable fact has its long tale of antecedents. What the practical pacifist is obliged to insist is that the Allies won the last war. This means that the international government of Europe has been predominantly in the hands of the Allies since the last war, that the political relations of the nations of Europe and the power of making the Continent into a tolerably peaceful comity of nations lay chiefly in the hands of France and Great Britain. It also implies that the effects of their government are clearly shown by the present condition of Europe, and it insists upon placing the responsibility for that condition upon the heads of those who possessed the power to determine the state of Europe from 1919 onwards. Whose then is the real responsibility for a condition of intolerable peace? Surely it belongs to those who had the fate of Europe in their hands in 1919. Power is an awful responsibility. When the countries who had Germany beaten to her knees, and who had the Treaty of Versailles and the League of Nations in the making, can disown the power they possessed, they will be fully entitled to disclaim all responsibility for the tragedy of Europe during the past twenty years—but not before.

Ostensibly this country is fighting to destroy Hitlerism. So hateful is the régime known by that name that were there even a remote possibility of destroying it by war even a pacifist might be tempted to fight. Fighting is of course the way to buttress it. When did blows knock the vice out

of a man and when was an "ism" destroyed by a great war? Were Catholicism and Protestantism destroyed by those who fought against them with all the intensity of hatred we have for this new religion? Call National Socialism devildom if you like—we will not dispute it—it is German boys and English boys who will be killed and driven insane by the war to destroy it

Therefore it is not good enough to say that we are fighting Hitlerism. To that war there is no end, for we shall be fighting a shape-changing abstraction that can only become more hideous the longer it is fought. "It is", said Mr Chamberlain, "the evil things that we shall be fighting against—brute force, bad faith, injustice, oppression and persecution." True, but it is infinitely more important, even from the standpoint of military tactics, that we shall know what we are fighting for than what we are fighting against. What are the actual objectives of this war? What are the British peace terms? If these are stated clearly and unmistakably in details real and material, then the leaflets to the Germans will have meaning and every British soldier will know for what he is rendering his service. At present Mr Chamberlain's impressive catalogue cannot be other than reminiscent to those of us who cried out for a peace of conciliation twenty years ago. What but "brute force" was exhibited by us at the time of the Armistice? Can we repel the charge of "bad faith" for our failure to fulfil the disarmament clause of the Treaty? "Injustice, oppression, and persecution"—are not these the true and simple description of the war-guilt confession, the fantastic demands for reparations, and the blockade that followed the war? Does the farmer blame the soil he sowed for the seeds he put into it?

This country fights because it does not know how to avoid fighting. It will discover the way if it will turn its eyes from the glaring evil that confronts it to the examina-

tion of its own responsibility for that evil. It will learn the way if it knows how to repent its own past. Even from the standpoint of policy, and in the hope of increasing the chances of disruption in Germany, the moment is ripe for a total repudiation of the Treaty of Versailles together with the announcement of our faith in the reality of a Federated Europe. The faith of a people given over to the worship of false gods is not destroyed by smashing their idols. Surely the British Government contains better psychologists than those who believe that the destruction of *anything* made in Germany can bring peace to Europe.

Meantime the hideous game of pure power-politics goes on. The alliance of Russia and Germany is seen as Stalin's master-stroke of diplomacy. If Poland is crushed and Germany enfeebled by a major conflict on the Western front, ideologies may be expected to trim their skirts to suit their walking. Japan has already come into line, and all the pieces are set for world war on the scale surpassing nightmare itself. Before that tribulation, which will be such as the world has never seen, for the love of God let us pause and beg for fitting humility and a willingness to make sacrifices for peace commensurate with the almost immeasurable issues at stake. The world of man is one as it never was before. Man can realise the truth in action through the conscious exercise of the imagination, and by deeds befitting that consciousness, or he can go down into the abyss of suicidal experience to learn the truth when half the world is in ruins. The choice is before us.

THE BOGEY OF HITLERISM

A FANTASTIC absurdity stands ostensibly between the people of Great Britain and the peace for which they are nominally at war. That absurdity is the person of one man. According to the code of morals which is supposed to govern the lives of European peoples (and, in so far as the people have power over their environment, does govern their relations with one another) Herr Hitler and the diplomacy of which he is the representative stand condemned as being too unscrupulously selfish and too selfishly unscrupulous to be tolerated by nations desiring to retain some semblance of justice and honesty in their international relations. On account of this man's genius as demagogue and power-politician, we are assured that the lives of millions of innocent people must be put in the peril of war, and that until he and the power which he exercises are destroyed, England and France must wage a war of indefinite length and unparalleled terror.

That is absurd. It is absurd because the effect is out of all proportion to the cause. This deification of a person and belief in his supernal power betrays a weakness of intelligence that forms a permanent barrier between honest people and their knowledge and understanding of the truth. Sooner or later our minds must be shaken free from this fixation if we are to achieve any of the objects for which this country stands. The reasoning which finds in one man and his conduct the efficient cause for a major international struggle is so superficial as to be false, and not until we recognise its falsity are we free to apply our minds to the true causes and only cures for the evils we feel to be intolerable. To be bitten by the Hitler-bug is to be suffering from a form of hydrophobia which, when its

effects become rampant, must compel us not to destroy Hitler or Hitlerism but to set ourselves the task of struggling to destroy the German people, with whom Mr Chamberlain has assured us we have no quarrel. The figures of the past were Paul Kruger and Kaiser Wilhelm, but what were the real causes and the real effects of the wars nominally fought to destroy them? This war on Hitler stands in the same category. It is war upon a mirage.

The truth is that Hitler is positively the least important person in all Europe, and Europe has got to take its eyes off him if it is ever again to see straight. Owing to historical circumstance, he has been able to batten upon the sense of frustration which Germany has suffered from since 1919—he has been able to exploit the indifference of the Allies to his country's fate, and to thrive upon the follies and inconsistencies of the supporters of the League. In resistance to this environment he has been able to establish a religion of negation—to appear as a National Messiah—the deliverer of his country from the oppressive past and the conjuror who could rid the world of Bolshevism and create yet another imperialism. Standing for the simple denial of the restrictions imposed upon Germany at Versailles, he has lived and thrived upon negation, and is, in fact, about the purest expression of reaction known to history. He maintains himself and the Nazi régime by his power to hold the German people in an attitude of fixed opposition, for he is the representative of the complete Nay-sayer. He has built himself a castle upon the sand of negation, a castle that will crumble the moment it is no longer upheld by fear. He is the supreme opportunist in a world suffering from unparalleled fear—fear basically due to the insecurity which afflicts Europe like a paralysis because its economic activity goes on in growing contradiction to the traditional forms of its outworn national economies.

Now if Germany did not believe in Hitler as a deliverer,

the great mass of the German people would never be willing to commit themselves to the hazard and horror of another war with France and Great Britain. And he can only appear as such so long as Germany is suffering from the fears begotten in 1919, or the present terror of re-conquest. All the nonsensical eyewash about German expansion through the Balkans and over the Baltic has been wiped out by the tidal flow of Soviet Russia westward—German expansion in Europe has come to an end (not because Hitler says so, but because the necessities imposed upon Germany both from without and from within have brought her to a halt) *provided* Hitler and Hitlerism are not given a new lease of life and enabled to batten upon the opposition of this country and France. Given that opposition, Germany will be put in the position to implement the nominal agreement with Russia which possibly offers unlimited help in the event of Germany being compelled to conduct a major war in the west. The paradox of the situation is that Hitler and Hitlerism are certainly doomed by peace, while they may thrive and must be endured—and even propagated in this country—so long as war is continued.

The reason is simple. Peace is the condition of creative life. Hitlerism is the persistent negation typified by war. Give peace to Germany and Hitlerism will lose its *raison d'être*. Wage war on Germany and the German people will hang on to Hitlerism as a drowning man clutches at a straw.

The question immediately arises: how can we give peace to Germany? What are the guarantees that any truce will be a prelude to peace?

The answer is that if the situation is grasped realistically such guarantees as might readily be given by the neutral countries, including Russia and the United States, would be seen to be more than sufficient. The Russian occupation

of Poland showed clearly at what cost Germany purchased security on her eastern frontiers. If France and Britain desire Russia to extend something greater than her influence as far as the Rhine, they have only to fulfil their threat of a three years' war. But if discretion and policy and humanity have any weight with the government of this country to-day—as we are confident that they have—then the terms upon which the rectification of the injustices done to Bohemia and Poland, and upon which the peace of Europe can be assured, will be brought into open discussion almost immediately.

THE PACIFIST IN WAR-TIME

PACIFIST bodies of one sort and another have been active in this country ever since the Great War, but signs are not wanting that, in spite of the quantity of literature on the subject published during the past few years, pacifism as a conviction and a faith is very imperfectly understood. In the last war the conscientious objector who went to prison was recognised, at any rate by the fighting troops, as an individualist who was willing to suffer for his convictions, and though he might be deemed a crank, or a "sissy", he was respected, probably according to the measure of his absolutism and the price he paid for it in hardship and loss of freedom. Now, in recognition of this kind of person, Mr Chamberlain, in proposing the Conscription Act, made it clear that his Government did not intend to renew the old fight with recalcitrant individuals of religious conviction, but preferred to leave it to be inferred that a country with such a tradition of democratic liberty as ours, would always have—as part payment of this freedom—to put up with oddities whom it would be easiest and wisest not to try to coerce.

The tribunal judges who have been recently engaged in the unenviable task of assessing sincerity of conviction have mostly endeavoured to interpret Mr Chamberlain's view. They appreciate the attitude of the religious fanatic provided he has held his strange views for some time, and can find a trustworthy person to testify to his oddity, but, like the vast mass of the public, they show no sympathy with the pacifist who claims no distinctive religious creed and regards his pacifism primarily as a social faith. They understand in some measure individual pacifism, but the sort of pacifism which has become distinctive since Dick

Sheppard took up the cudgels against war, they know nothing about indeed officially they have no right to take cognisance of it, and no doubt they have interpreted the mind of the Government in refusing to recognise pacifism as a social creed

But the distinctive feature of the pacifism advocated by Dick Sheppard was that, besides being individual, it was a social gospel. There was the intention of corporate movement in the gathering together of all those who in answer to the challenge of war replied, "We say No". With the formation of the Peace Pledge Union pacifism passed out of the chrysalis and individual stage into the winged and social stage, and as a social creed became, almost insensibly, something far more formidable, revolutionary, and reformatory than a movement of individual conscientious objectors. However blind individual pacifists may have been to the change, the difference was undoubtedly appreciated by Authority, which whispered beneath its breath that these people, if they had their way, would "turn the world upside down". So Authority employed the best weapon now available for suppression—the Press boycott, and great pacifist activity and public propaganda simply did not happen as far as the records of the daily Press are concerned.

Public ignorance on the subject is partly due to this discountenance by Authority, but only partly. Pacifism in its greatest interpreters (Gandhi, for example) is a great and comprehensive faith, and its social implications are not such as can be readily appreciated by those who still regard it as the mere negation of war. Pacifism as "a way of life" remains meaningless to the majority of people, and indeed to many to whom it might have been intelligible if its simplicity had not made it appear to be—what early Christianity was to the Greeks—the foolishness of imperfect logic. Nevertheless, in view of the amount of literature

that has been scattered up and down the country it is surprising that a man of erudition, such as Mr T S Eliot for example, should show only the most elementary understanding of the meaning and social incidence of pacifism. Mr Eliot has recently published a highly interesting and important book treating of the foundation of order in Western civilisation, entitled *The Idea of a Christian Society*. It is an essay that shows all Mr Eliot's outstanding virtues as a thinker. It is beautifully written by one who thinks clearly and knows precisely how to express what he thinks in the clearest terms. And since clarity of thought is one of our greatest needs, and one of the rarest accomplishments, we have no hesitation in recommending everyone to obtain this book and to read it with that part of his mind which the Press to-day leaves completely somnolent. As always, reading Mr Eliot is an ascetic exercise. There is a fixity of attitude about him which tends to a certain aridity. He rejoices in dogma like a theologian of the old school, and the graces which are associated with the Christian religion, particularly the grace of intellectual charity, seem to be foreign to his nature, but as a thesis this statement is of the highest value, particularly now when the world desires order but is unable to see that order can only be built upon a foundation of faith.

It was, however, astonishing to find in such a book, at this time of day, such a sentence as the following "for pacifism can only continue to flourish so long as the majority of persons forming a society are not pacifists, just as sectarianism can only flourish against the background of orthodoxy." This elementary and negative conception of pacifism shows that Mr Eliot is totally ignorant of the growth of pacifism in the past twenty years. He still regards it, along with Mr Chamberlain, as the mere protestantism of the individual, and apparently has no conception

of the vital infusion of Christian faith into social and political life which pacifism, socially conceived, implies

His comment is characteristic of common ignorance, and is here remarked because it is precisely this negative view of pacifism which has to be overcome before the very reformation of society that Mr Eliot desires can even begin. For pacifism is a resolution come to by the individual at the end of a long pathway of experience. The pacifist is not ignorant of the causes of war. The negation of war which he voices is not made in ignorance of the fact that socially he is responsible for a condition of society which is normally one of incipient war. The informed pacifist has given plenty of anxious consideration to the difficulty of the position Mr Eliot points out in the words "The notion of communal responsibility, of the responsibility of every individual for the sins of the society to which he belongs, is one that needs to be more firmly apprehended, and if I share the guilt of my society in time of 'peace,' I do not see how I can absolve myself from it in time of war, by abstaining from common action." The knowledgeable pacifist of to-day is fully aware of his social responsibility and, paradoxical as it may sound, it is for that very reason that he sees the need of making pacifism socially effective. He does not try to absolve himself from the sins of society, indeed he is not predominantly self-concerned, but what he is resolved upon is to change the direction of social activity so radically that the normal working of the social machine shall no longer grind those who serve it into the dust and ashes of war.

Surely this act of repentance, which the repudiation of war implies, ought to be intelligible to a man of Mr Eliot's religious belief. Or would he suggest that repentance is impossible to the individual guilty of social crime? The whole question resolves itself into a consideration of the point at which a man is at liberty to contract out of a society

which he knows to be evil. The socialist indicts the capitalist system, but he does not enjoy the "option of living in any other, and so long as the capitalist system obtains, he is under the necessity of living in some accord with its working. But in the choice of offering himself as an active agent of military force, the pacifist is aware that he has here reached a point at which the yea or nay of the individual has social meaning. He has been driven to this point by a system over which he has a minimum of control, but now his personal integrity is put to the test and his sense of right and wrong personally challenged. Either he will become the willing and active agent of death and destruction, or he will not. It is literally up to him. And the fact that he shares a social responsibility for a condition of incipient war does not absolve him from withholding from *deliberate* wickedness the moment he sees his personal participation in war as such. The fact that he is conscious enough to know that he is a member of society and shares the communal responsibility cannot affect the ultimate issue.

The crudely negative idea of pacifism, and the failure to perceive that pacifism has become an essential and the first step towards the re-creation of society upon a truly communal or Christian basis, only make it the more incumbent upon pacifists to demonstrate in actual terms what they mean by a pacifist way of life. War, as such, is now wholly discredited. Every decent person is ashamed of war every public apologist is obliged to refer to war in terms of moral disapproval. The whole civilised world is longing to free itself from the barbaric chains of war, but it does not know how to escape, and is at present unwilling to pay the price of peace. Therefore the whole duty of the pacifist is to show the way, religiously, politically, socially, economically, with the full knowledge that it is both the way of sacrifice and of creative activity. And just as pacifism is first an act of individual repentance, a willingness to suffer

the penalty of abstention from violence, and the turning to another and nobler way of life than the incessant pursuit of personal advantage, so the pacifism that has become a social creed calls upon those who profess it to make social sacrifice and social effort towards the creation of a truly co-operative or socialist community

What then is the duty of the pacifist in time of war? In so far as he is an integral member of society it is, of course, his duty to try and stop the war by every means in his power. But let him not forget that his pacifism finds expression in his personal dissociation from the ruling majority. Such a reflection should teach him that mere vociferation against war will do little to bring it to an end—particularly in the case of a nation of persons fighting most reluctantly and only under a sense of moral compulsion. Politically he must show the ways and means to peace in terms that are politically persuasive. Economically he must explain the barren rottenness of the capitalist system in decay, and the inevitability with which such a system must always lead to war. But religiously and socially he must himself witness to some creative form of life and thus show in action how men can exist in a social harmony and not as cruelly competitive units.

A grave danger lies in wait for the pacifist who is unconscious of any social duty other than protesting against war in time of war. The danger is that he lays himself open to the charge of being a social parasite. And the more war becomes the total activity of the nation, the greater the danger. There must always be an element of sacrifice in willingness to fight; there should always be an equivalent element of sacrifice in the unwillingness to fight, and every conscious pacifist should search himself to discover what sacrifice he is actually making for the cause to which he is committed. For only so can he hope to make his creed intelligible. It is by their passion for social

service that the Quakers have won their enfranchisement from the duties of war. Only as pacifists are ready to bear the communal burdens of their neighbours and demonstrate the possibility of creative living, even in time of war, will their creed commend itself, by the works that follow it, to those who are hostile or unsympathetic.

War itself dictates the necessity for such action. Granted that to-day every activity is contributory in degree to the prosecution of the war, and that logically the pacifist must commit suicide to be totally non-co-operative in war-time, there remains the necessity for humane social activity which war only intensifies. War is the pacifist's opportunity to show by example the creative inwardness of his creed. That is the time to begin putting the unemployed land into productive contact with the unemployed person. By so doing we shall come to the understanding of what is really basic industry, and in restoring the natural harmony between man and the earth begin to rediscover the foundations of true civilisation. Industrialism has shattered this harmony more grievously in this country than anywhere in the world—with the possible exception of Japan, which seems to have bettered our unhappy example. This war is the nemesis of competitive industrialism. In the midst of it, let us try to discover our human foundations.

THE SCYTHE

I HAVE been learning to use a scythe
If I remember rightly, Thomas Hardy, in a poem
written during the last war, saw a man with a scythe as
the symbol of permanence at the time of the breaking of
nations. But I wasn't thinking of Hardy's poem when I
began sharpening the long blade and trying to recapture
the swing I had learned a little about in the piping years
of 1920-25. I wanted to cut grass. And I was persuaded
that if a man can cut short dry grass with a scythe he knows
how to do something worth doing.

At the moment I am open to challenge any professional
writer to an hour's grass-cutting with a scythe. Incidentally
we shall both of us change our occupations in war-time for
a better. And I think my offer is timely, for to-day I know
of nothing more enjoyable than the feel of the long pull as
the blade comes through the tough bents and leaves a clean
swathe in its track. Enjoyable occupations are not at the
moment too plentiful. Neither are useful ones. Scything
is both. It makes for concentration both of mind and
body. It is divinely simple and it has also just enough of
the difficulty without which no craft is artistic or enjoyable.
For you can never do the job perfectly: the roughness of
the ground sees to that. But if you keep on trying you
can come near enough for the purposes of art. You can
learn to keep the heel of the scythe hard on the ground:
to use the body and not merely the arms. to pull and not
merely to swing. to keep your stance related to the set of
the blade and gradually to cut clean and without those
tell-tale tufts.

A man's occupation ought to bear some relation to the

times in which he is living Rightly or wrongly, cutting grass with a scythe gives me this sense In general I hold that the world is enduring a fit of madness Bombers come overhead while I mow, and might rob me of all sleep at night if I were not physically tired The cut grass is now stored hay and will feed beasts next winter—someone's if not mine. Of course you may say, why sweat away with an antiquated tool when with a tractor you could do the whole job in a tenth of the time? Well, I haven't a tractor, and in the way of preference I like a scythe just now better than anything propelled by an internal combustion engine. There's a nearness—and a dearness—about a simple scythe which I fail to find in a tractor that at a distance is apt to look like a tank The links between the natural earth and the man with a scythe are closer and less abstract than those that connect the man driving a tractor with the soil And it is good to be close to nature these days rich and consoling One gets the much-needed sense that there is a still constancy somewhere The earth doesn't argue, doesn't propagand, doesn't contradict itself, is not in a panic, doesn't mistrust you, doesn't even want your identity card So, as a near companion, there is much to be said for it just now And the closer you can get the more there is to enjoy

Besides, if we are ever short of petrol and the remaining horses have been killed off, perhaps the man who can wield a scythe will come into his own I should like to work with a whole field of them We should recapture the past, the slow, unhurrying, durable past when men cut corn and found time to sing at the end of a day's reaping For the scythe of course is the symbol of Time, and when men have rediscovered Time perhaps they will also rediscover the scythe For Time is what is now lost Whosoever will lose his time shall find it, and as Henry Tracy reminded us in *The Adelphi* recently, whosoever would save his time

shall lose it We've lost time to such an extent lately that we've now not even time to re-arm

Speaking personally, moreover, I grow weary of my dependence upon the machine, and it is luxury to be free of it and come back to the simple, magnificently devised tool The scythe weds itself to the healthy male body and becomes an extension of its faculties Thus it becomes quite easily an instrument of intelligible and useful power, and takes to itself the human qualities of art

Some day no doubt the tractor will acquire some of these qualities, but much water has to flow under the bridges before that happens We may even have to rebuild a civilisation before the tractor is really humanised, and still the scythe will have its place it will still be what it has been to me in a time when mind cannot keep pace with event—recreative, or more strictly speaking re-creative.

To make work re-creative, that surely should become one of our ambitions in the coming new age. Work has spelt slavery to countless thousands for generations now Work must be redeemed from the curse of the extrinsic and re-made integral with the normal life of the normal man And the moment when the work of industrially mechanised competition has landed Europe in the chaos and catastrophe of industrially mechanised war is no inapt moment at which to begin bringing human labour again into the rhythm of natural life

For all our habits and employments should take their time from the duration of night and day and the seasons which govern them When we depart from that perfect hour-glass we begin to lose time in the effort to gain it "Speeding-up" will yet be recognised as the classical method of *losing time*, and when we have *gained* a truly proportional sense of time the task of employing it usefully will appear as novel and delightful Having destroyed time and space our business is now to reinstate them

consciously After suffering the chaos of a mortal world lacking any criterion of time or space to govern it, we shall I believe turn to those precise habits—those “minute particulars” of human employment—which give back to us an enlarged and ample sense of both time and space We shall, I trust to God, learn again the beautiful art of living unhurried lives

By great good chance it so happened that while discovering how to use a scythe I came across Eric Gill's book *Sacred and Secular* It is one to be greatly recommended as an antidote to the kind of reading readiest to hand nowadays For what it discusses is the relation of art and industry to holiness At present they haven't the remotest connection *Hinc illae lacrimae* “We have followed too much the devices and desires of our own hearts, and there is no health in us” the devices of time-and-labour-saving, the desires of unbounded ambition and pure self-aggrandisement And following these unboundedly, we have lost the human form divine and become fear-stricken inhuman cattle doing things of which the unconscious beasts would be ashamed It is time to learn humbly the relation of art and industry to holiness—or that wholeness in activity which is in effect the worship of God Is there any time when such activity is unsuitable? Presumably the Church thinks so, but perhaps the sovran way for a nation, as for an individual, to find out how to cease from doing evil is to learn how to do the smallest thing well.

STOP BOMBING!

THE phase of the war which has now been reached is one that is already familiar to the people of China, Abyssinia, Spain, Norway, Belgium, Holland, France. The terror of bombing is also well known to the people of Arabia, Somaliland, and the North-West Frontier of India, and doubtless they, together with Republican Spain, see what is happening to the people of Britain and Germany in the clear light of nemesis. The methods of terrorisation are recoiling on the heads of those who first used them. The wheel has come full circle and we are being done to as we have done. Both we and the Germans are ostensibly destroying military objectives. Both of us know that it is impossible to discriminate between what is military in purpose and what is civil. Both are in process of discovering that the objective of greatest military importance is a human being. Considerations of age and sex are no longer valid. We are engaged in "total war." "Total war" is worse than barbarous, it is insane, but words have meaning, and total war means war that is prosecuted to the point of the extermination of the enemy. The fate of Rotterdam is *characteristic* of modern war. It affords an example of the successful use of the modern method of war, and the abominations of Old Testament history pale before it.

That wholesale massacre is the ideal method of modern war is a statement that will be hotly denied by all who still believe in time-honoured tradition. It will be denied because such a purpose is in the mind of no one. We propose to achieve by war a certain limited end. In pursuit of that end we are driven by necessity to make use of every

available means In so doing we are bound to lose sight of the fact that the means may prove to be totally incommensurable with the end proposed, and they are almost sure to be whenever we give ourselves up to the attainment of any end at all costs "At all costs" implies action without regard to means Hence the question follows inevitably what if the means themselves prove to be suicidal?

That is the question which every sane person in Britain and in Germany should be asking himself to-day It is irrelevant to the immediate object of victory, but it is the fundamental question that lies behind the whole of human activity to-day, and it awaits its answer by mankind as a species already doubtful about its survival Time and circumstance will not answer the question, though they will witness to our response or our silence man himself is called upon to face up to this question while there is yet time, and before war and race-suicide become completely synonymous

War is war, and sentiment is wasted upon it Our contention is that what the civil populations of this country and the enemy's are experiencing is not war but something immeasurably inferior—the plain barbarism and insanity of designed mass massacre This must be put an end to or it will put an end to man In that it is designed it can be abolished And the way to begin is to stop bombing It can be done Strange that such an assurance should be necessary Nevertheless, we repeat, it can be done If there is any wisdom, any humanity, any rational desire for self-preservation in the minds of statesmen guiding the destinies of those countries at present not involved in our conflict, let them appeal to the conscience of the world

War as it was experienced even twenty-three years ago still retained vestiges of the rags of honour, even though it was then problematic whether mechanisation had not

robbed it of all that was worthy of the name of war. What is happening in Britain and Germany to-day is without a stitch of honour. Also it is utterly and entirely unworthy of the name of war. When are we going to face up to reality by acknowledging the fact? That we should begin by acknowledging this and thus facing the truth is of the utmost and most urgent importance. Whatever we are called upon to do, whatever appears to be necessary in the circumstances, for God's sake let us acquire the honesty and simplicity to know with our whole intelligence what it is, for the greatest crime in history is said to have been committed by men who knew not what they did, and if we should discover, by an objective examination of our actions, that our unconscious is acting in conspiracy against our rational understanding, then we may be appalled to learn that we are unconsciously repeating that crime upon a cosmic scale.

The essence of this matter lies in our conception of human justice. If the innocent are destroyed for the guilty, justice is outraged. In the long run—and very often much sooner—justice will be vindicated, and woe to them who have defied it. The bodies of innocent children and unoffending women bombed out of life are witnesses to outraged justice and their blood cries to heaven. What we most direfully need to recognise at this moment is that it does not cry in vain, not because some deity may be expected to step from the sky to vindicate their cause and mete out punishment, but because crime is its own punishment and, being what it is, cannot do other than bring its vengeance upon the head of him who commits it. Men are impatient with the law of inevitable retribution and superimpose upon it their own codes of retributive justice—with disastrous effects, because retribution is itself inherent in crime. In other words, "Vengeance is mine, I will repay, saith the Lord" a statement as true

to-day as when it was written The person who wittingly outrages justice murders himself.

"If I should dare to lay my finger on a grain of sand
In way of vengeance, I punish the already punish'd O whom
Should I pity if I pity not the sinner who is gone astray!
O Albion, if thou takest vengeance, if thou revengest thy wrongs,
Thou art for ever lost! What can I do to hinder the Sons
Of Albion from taking vengeance? or how shall I them perswade?"

What we are in process of discovering to-day, through the most terrible experience, is the answer to the paradox: When is a war not a war? Every soldier knows the answer. Simple folk have always known it. Now the man in the street (and the woman in the shelter) is learning it. It isn't a logical answer, indeed, true as it is—obvious as it would be to any detached observer—the simple and true answer has been hidden from the wise and prudent who, in the persons of bishops, professors and politicians, have been disproving its truth with increasing vehemence for years now. In their despite, however, the plain fact is being pressed home upon us that war is not war when it becomes massacre. My old friend in the trenches on St George's Hill, Longueval, exactly twenty-four years ago, knew it when, armed to the teeth, he stood waiting to receive the shells fired from guns out of sight miles away. "This isn't war," he commented. "It's just bloody murder"—a remark that may be made to appear ridiculous if you subject it to sufficient intellectual analysis, but one that states the whole truth about modern war if you jump to its simple meaning.

For war, to be veritable war, must be the conflict of opposing persons. Every device of the scientific invention which separated the physical bodies of combatants in war, creating a void of abstraction between them, has done something to destroy the legitimate and vital nature of war. The obvious difference between war and massacre is that

the one is fought while the other is merely suffered You cannot make "war" on people who cannot fight' you can only murder them Ask Mussolini

It may be said, what difference does it make? If the object of war is the forceful imposition of the will, what difference does it make whether the exercise of force takes the form of conflict or of massacre? Such an answer can only be made in ignorance of human psychology, for it implies that people live by ends and not by the means by which they hope to achieve their ends War, to remain war, must retain that struggle of physical forces by which alone it is redeemed from cold-blooded murder or suicide Physical conflict is essential to war because war at its best is an activity of primary and instinctive creatures and can only be healthy when it represents a blood response Without this insurgence of the blood, without the utmost exercise of *physical* force and without the appreciation of one another that sooner or later arises in the breasts of physically opposed persons, the atonement of blood (which is what real war is) is impossible there is no catharsis, war becomes lecherous, degenerate, morally abominable, indefinite, all-pervading, without hope of fulfilment, reaching out into a void of despair, without appeasement, without meaning, without end, without sane mind because without health of body

To-day the abuse of scientific intelligence has made war interminable our prospect It is to this pitch of degeneracy that war has descended with the bombing of the centres of European civilisation And detached, it would appear, as is the activity of the most potent agents of this war, this de-humanised mechanical method of "fighting" reacts with all its moral horror upon its exponents Killing unarmed civilians by loosing death upon them from the clouds is so contemptible a crime that any man who did it wittingly could not look his fellows in the face When whole nations

are being drawn into such an activity, millions of men become self-contemptible. Humanly they will come to an end of themselves, and if they do not speedily cry to God for mercy they are in danger of passing for ever out of the rank of human beings.

For the natural laws of human life may not be contradicted indefinitely. For a time Macbeth may defy his conscience and with a courage that is sub-human chain it with a will of iron, but in that he fights against the current of life his end is sure and his damnation is certain. The horror of to-day is that we and our enemies have yielded to the dictation of the requirements of total war and, in the hope of virtuous life, are turning the wheel of mechanical death. We are becoming totally uncontrolled in our use of machines that, uncontrolled, have the power of obliterating man as a species from the earth. We are acquiring the courage which defies damnation. Boys in the sky rain death in such ample measure that whole populations begin to infect the earth like vermin beneath its skin. The machine begins its triumph over man, being enabled to commit inhumanities no man is inhuman enough to be guilty of. We have invented mechanical instruments of torture that now begin to fill earth and sky and sea, till nothing that breathes can be assured of breath. And this universal desecration we continue to sanctify and dignify by the time-honoured name of war.

In the name of God, let the people of England and the people of Germany stop bombing. The game has become so foul for want of a referee there will soon be no players, but only the surging crowd of spectators flying at each other's throats. It has been said of this country, "we can take it." We can—to a pacifist, to a man. We are not squealing. All we ask is, to what end? Already hundreds of bombed children lie dead. In the total war they too were fully engaged. Could *they* "take it"? And what of

those who gave it them? Where is the man who will stand up and say that his duty to his country compelled him to this massacre of the innocents? Stop bombing—unless we are willing to make the earth a place too fear-stricken for human life. And if any reptile should breathe the word honour as a deterrent to this appeal, let him be anathema, for there is not one question affecting the moral honour of mankind that does not wait upon the removal of this appalling dishonour to us all.

THE CHURCH EQUIVOCAL

I WONDER if there is any significance in the fact that I, who for at least thirty years have shunned church-going, now seek out the village church on Sunday morning with real zest. Our church is a mile and a half from the village. When the plague came, the labourers' hovels that surrounded the church and the Hall were burnt, and the villagers decamped to the moor in order to get off the plague-stricken soil. Perhaps that is why the village as a whole now appears to avoid the church like the plague. As for me, it required the occasion of death to take me there. But when I heard the Rector read the burial service for dear old Mrs Florence Tyler who, as he said at the grave, had at last found a better shelter than the London Tube, I recognised a man for whom the marvellous words of the service were veritable truth.

It is worth going a long way to hear the words of the Church Service uttered with conviction and reverent intelligence, for the men who compiled that service were wise with a wisdom that has very nearly perished from the earth. "We have followed *too much* the devices and desires of our own hearts." I salute the profound wisdom in that "too much", because the following of the devices and desires of our hearts is in itself essential to sound, purposive living. It is the proper expression of human personality. But in every effort of self-expression we stand in mortal danger of the deification of our own free wills. That is why we need the correction which prunes our ever-growing egotism and subjects our own devices and desires to a purpose far beyond them.

Listening to the well-worn words of the Litany, I could not help looking back through the vista of years at the men

to whom the Laws of God were the basic realities of their lives "Lord, have mercy upon us Christ, have mercy upon us Lord, have mercy upon us" The men who concluded their petitions with the thrice-repeated cry for mercy were men who well knew what it meant to have an awe-stricken consciousness of sin and of judgment The holy law of God was real to them They knew when they had broken it they knew they could not help breaking it, and they knew the breaking of it was fraught with human penalty So it was with truly humble, lowly, penitent and obedient hearts that they approached the throne of the heavenly grace, pleading for mercy

This deep reverence for the law of God gave substance and stamina to their lives It gave them background It gave proportion to their dealings with one another It gave life itself majesty and sublimity In times of trouble and perplexity it gave them something to fall back on It gave them a standard of conduct It braced and buttressed their insecure personal lives with an ever-present sense of eternal truth It made them men of moral stature There were giants in the days when the general Confession, the Absolution, the Lord's Prayer, the *Te Deum* and the Creed were heartfelt expressions of what men believed to be literally true If it were only to be reminded of the men of those days, it is worth my while to go to church in these

I love, too, to think of the moral fibre of the men who broke with the English Church when they felt that the virtue had gone out of it, and that it had become a tyranny which was breaking them It is not for nothing that Milton wrote in hexameters and brought the Latin tradition into the vulgar tongue The thing is a symbol of the transition that was taking place the revivifying of what had become formal through the weakness and irresponsibility of men Most of us lack to-day the perspective to appreciate the ascetic virtue of Puritanism, but I believe

the days are coming when out of sheer reaction to the inanity begotten of superficiality we shall seek purpose as the Puritans sought it and find its pursuit as rigorous a discipline.

For the glaring fact about the world to-day is that it has no criterion of moral values. Indeed, indeed, "Milton, thou shouldst be living at this hour". For the man who could write

"Avenge O Lord thy slaughter'd Saints, whose bones
Lie scatter'd on the Alpine mountains cold"

spoke with the thunder of authority that no voice in all the world—except it be Mahatma Gandhi's—has to-day. Say what you will, faith makes all the difference, and it was faith which gave Milton the power to speak with authority. We have no faith—no faith even in democracy, for democracy without a criterion of moral values is just a greedy rabble suffering from *hubris* and fighting for the loaves and fishes.

Where is the criterion of moral virtues in a society that can see its women and children bombed day after day and only pride itself upon its stubborn determination to endure the humanly unendurable? Where is the voice to say with authority: "This thing must cease, because it is an infringement of the laws of God and man, and is so gross and obscene that Sodom and Gomorrah would be shocked by it"? No such voice is heard in Europe, and when it is raised in India the prison gates begin to clang. No one in the West has the authority to speak to human consciences because the Church has lost its function and, through failing to put all the devices and desires of men's hearts to the test of their validity by insisting upon their dependent obedience to the laws of God, has become the apologist for acts and deeds which the veriest babe in religion knows to be flagrant and heinous. In the plain terms of human action

the Church does not know the difference between right and wrong. It has sold its heritage for a mess of statecraft, and now can only bid its followers to do almost exactly as their execrated enemies do—but with a Christian purpose! If this is not the plea. Let us do evil that good may come, what is it?

The persons in whom moral authority was once vested have now forsworn it. So be it, but let the Pacifist of to-day take warning and seek for God where He is to be found. By the Lateran Treaty—according to a recent Catholic writer—the Church of Rome is freed “from humiliating dependence upon particular politics.” This reminds us of Blake’s dictum on “general good”, which he declared to be the refuge of the knave and the hypocrite. For such “freedom”, being interpreted, means freedom from judgment on specific human activity of any sort upon which the Pope does not think it politic to judge. No wonder priests can bless tanks being used in “a righteous cause”. No wonder that in the same breath they can exhort men to lives of purity and holiness. Freedom from humiliating dependence upon particular politics means, in fact, freedom from the onus of moral responsibility in the actuality of men’s daily lives at the very moment in history when moral responsibility is the world’s most crying need.

Nor is moral authority in a country which has forsworn papal authority in better condition. Rather worse, for the infinite variety of moral judgments let loose upon us by our Bishops, Archbishops, and Pastors does less than nothing to give us any sort of real criterion of moral values. On the contrary it proves to the unsophisticated mind that no such criterion exists in the English Church. Since its leaders lack any stable and effective moral criterion themselves, they do not even attempt to deliver goods no longer in stock. They naturally confine their efforts to expressions of moral compunction that are without basis in

principle, and in so doing they are not ashamed to show an enormous regard for expediency and an amazing aptitude for equivocation

These comments are prompted by the reception accorded a recent article in these pages entitled "Stop Bombing!" One of my correspondents wrote to remind me that I lacked historical perspective and had forgotten that massacre was commonly attendant upon war in all ages. Carl Heath, in *The Friend*, thought the proposal "unrealistic", since it made no attempt to take away the occasion of war and betrayed the old partiality for getting rid of what is deemed at any moment to be the most grievous instrument of war, without tackling the thing in itself

My response to such criticism is that man is always under the urgent necessity of obeying the command "Cease to do evil learn to do well." The history of an evil such as modern war is long and tortuous. It is admirable to know it, but knowledge of evolution is no cure for crime, and what we need to-day, in my judgment, is not so much an understanding of how we have reached the depths to which we have fallen as a strong hand to pull us out of the pit. Our urgent need is for repentance, and *repentance can only be made on the level of conscious conviction*—neither above nor below it. The whole gospel of pacifism is known to few, and among them, doctors disagree. Must the whole world therefore wait for a complete philosophy before fleeing from an obvious wrath to come? Shall we go on with the massacre of the civil population until every person in Britain and Germany has achieved the sainthood of Gandhi? Rather I would say to my pacifist friends: "Thou hast faith: have it unto thyself", but let it not be the occasion of preventing the humblest intelligence from true and natural reaction to the lesson of experience. The sentiment of anger may appear to you to be a prime cause of war, and something to be purged from your own heart

if peace is to be real, but do not let your own awareness of the limitless need of purgation prevent you from encouraging one who would respond to his own conviction of sin *as and when he feels it*. Like yourself, he has to *begin somewhere*. Let him cease from the wrongdoing that is most evident to him, for if he does not begin there, he will never begin at all. In a word.

“Why stand we here trembling around
Calling on God for help, and not ourselves, in whom God dwells,
Stretching a hand to save the falling Man?”

The world is a chaos of shunned responsibility. Since authority has forsworn it, let every man assume his own. Is this “unrealistic”? Unlikely, without a doubt, but nothing could be more simply and completely realistic. The magnitude of the change which any act of repentance involves makes such change appear wholly improbable to the evolutionist. But the discontent of the Prodigal with husks was a potent factor in his revolutionary change of heart. Let the people of this country and the people of Germany come to the simple resolution that *bombing is not good enough*. Let them act upon that resolution. Then let philosophy do its work. On a slippery slope above an abyss, the direst need is to discover a place where we can stop slipping. That is our position to-day.

“PIONEERS, O PIONEERS!”

THE position of the conscientious objector during this war is perhaps worth considering at the moment, for in some respects it differs very much from that of the C O s during 1914-18. The most affective difference comes from the fact that war has entered upon its final or totalitarian stage. Now, and henceforth, war cannot be thought of as an activity detached from the normal working of society: its intrinsic nature has become fully apparent. We now realise that war, of some sort, is the normal activity of Western civilisation (as Tagore pointed out in 1917) that not until men have discovered new motives for living will there be any hope of a world which will not be constantly bursting into the flames of armed conflict. Moreover, we have been compelled to realise that these blazes, since they are resultant and not intentioned, cannot be confined, as activity, to sections of society such as the army, the navy, and the air force: they involve everybody, so that during war the word “civilian” is practically meaningless, it may indeed be expected to pass permanently out of the language.

The social problem which this state of affairs creates is probably too big to be faced by a country at a time when it is firmly convinced it is fighting for its life. The mass of the people still retain traditional belief in the difference between peace and war as contrary states. Having little understanding of economics, and less knowledge of the ramifications of international capitalist finance, they only hope vaguely that America and Great Britain will be able, after the war, to ensure the peace of the world by the combined use of force and power-balancing, or that some sort of federation of mankind—possibly on Wellsian lines—

will come about once Herr Hitler has been deprived of his power. They *feel* the effects of total war very acutely, but they are ignorant of the historical reasons for it, and while they have lamentable cause to deplore the annihilation of civilian life proper, they cannot see how it could have been avoided, and so endure total war with depressed stoicism. Protest against their condition has been made illegal—necessarily, of course, in a State engaged in total war, for however monstrous the condition may seem—and indeed be—protest against it, once war is consented to, is illogical.

In such a *milieu*, and from such a standpoint, the position of the C O appears almost fantastical. He himself looks like a survival—the Rip Van Winkle of the old liberal idea. And as an individualist, so he is. Life, expressing itself through the deep instinctive desires of man, is working towards a common weal or a common woe, and the power of the individual to withstand this process is truly negligible. But while the mere war-resister finds the ground being cut more and more from under his feet, and while the objection of the individualist or the quietist becomes futile in face of the inescapable process of social unification, the very impotence of the present system to produce the semblance of a peaceful society makes the emergence of a body of people determined to live only by peaceful means, phenomenal and immensely important.

No such body of people was of course envisaged by Mr Chamberlain when he inserted the Conscience Clauses in the Armed Forces Act. He merely wanted to overcome the minor difficulty of the eccentric person, with the minimum of disturbance to the workings of military organisation, and to retain that semblance of religious liberty which, for propaganda purposes, would serve the British cause a good turn in the eyes of antediluvian democrats living in America and the Dominions. How

well he succeeded, historians will narrate. For without the least appearance of persecution or hardship, he eliminated anything in the nature of a political party opposed to war, and at the same time put the C O into the position of having to stew in his own juice. Instead of clapping him into gaol, or making him face a firing-squad, Mr Chamberlain, in effect, simply permitted the consequences of resistance to the inexorable conditions of totalitarian war to make themselves felt. These conditions were such that the C O either became unemployed and unemployable, or engaged in some work essential to—however seemingly remote from—the prosecution of the war. And when there appeared to be the least danger that the nominally free men might become a considerable class, the Tribunals themselves promptly took the strain on behalf of the State by discovering, after the French *débâcle*, that only angels or idiots were entitled to complete exemption—all the rest could henceforth be required to find work of national importance as a condition of freedom from military liability.

The legislation applying to property and disposal of persons in industry, which was rushed through about this time, made it clear that the State reserved to itself the right to use "civilian" labour as it liked, so that the C O found himself in the practical predicament of being faced with the possibilities of forced labour (if he failed to find approved employment) or starvation. Prison only fell to those who failed to convince the Tribunals that they were genuine C O s, and sentences were, generally, only for short periods, at the end of which the C O was once again free to choose between "essential" work or suicide.

But "man's necessity is God's opportunity." The effort to find an alternative to war as a means of living was really what brought bodies like the Fellowship of Reconciliation

and the Peace Pledge Union into being. These were not composed in their vital elements of mere war-resisters: the best of their members knew that peace-making, not war destruction, was their task. They soon came to perceive that the onus of creating the conditions for “a new way of life” lay with them. Of course they did not violently divorce themselves from current politics, but struggled to avert the on-coming storm by every legitimate means in their power. Essentially their task was then what it remains to-day: to awaken consciousness. But the hope that social consciousness could be sufficiently awakened to prevent something like universal disaster was always a rather forlorn one to the leaders of the pre-war pacifist movement. When war came, their eyes were already turned in the direction of creative effort, and away from mere social and political intransigence.

And since all things work together for good to those who are determined to serve life, the very totalitarian nature of modern war has compelled pacifists to corporate and creative effort. Necessity has compelled them to seek justifiable means of living, and the same necessity has largely debarred them from engaging in that struggle on the entirely competitive basis which is normal to the war-supporter. The Tribunals, acting from one motive, have repeatedly made “agriculture” the condition of exemption: pacifists, acting from another, have desired to go down to the foundations in their hope of a new order and have perceived the primary importance of the land. The extremes met. With the result that small communities have sprung up all over the country, composed of young men determined to work co-operatively for their own elementary needs and, if necessary, gladly to be partakers of the inconsistency of feeding armies—particularly if those armies should contain hungry women and children.

In the official mind these pioneers do not exist. There

are the Land Girls whom the Minister of Agriculture knows to be amazons and about whom the farmer has other and more realistic views. Nature has a way of asserting herself, even in the face of war-time resolution, and Nature has decreed that a two-hundredweight sack should suit a man's back better than a woman's—indeed that a woman's natural burden should be carried fore rather than aft. Anyway, in this inevitable "back to the land" movement, dictated by war necessity, the young pacifist finds himself quite naturally on the road, but by a new path, the way of co-operation and community. And there, for the pacifist, is the snag.

"Community" is a word that can be seen in focus by probably not more than one person in a million. To some it appears like a red light—it is the forewarning of an army of lame ducks, social misfits, self-assertive egoists, eccentric individualists—all the weak, purposeless, opinionated hangers-on who imagine they can find a feather-bed collectively just because they cannot make a bed of sheets and mattresses for themselves. This waddling collection has in the past brought the word community into suspicion and disrepute. It has given the cynic cause to blaspheme.

There are others for whom the word is surrounded with a pale green halo. These are the sentimentalists and the inexperienced who, having met their like at some garden-party or group-leaders' meeting, think the atmosphere of forbearance which has supported social contact for an hour may be maintained for a year or more without effort. They talk glibly of "going into" community or "joining" a community, much as you or I would talk of going to the co-op. or joining its society.

It cannot be said too early or too emphatically that pacifists beglamoured by such ideas of what is in reality the hardest and most disciplined form of life now awaiting

fulfilment, need to do a powerful lot of hard thinking and to take a tonic measure of practical experience before they embark on ventures foredoomed to failure, if not disgrace. If this new path is one of high calling for the pacifist movement it is essential that pacifists should rise to the height of their calling. And this can only be done by those fully conscious of the arduous and endurances which high effort always demands. For failing such consciousness pacifism is in danger of becoming permanently associated with abortive and sporadic attempts by inexperienced persons to live a kind of life which becomes simply disreputable—a life of bickering and dispute, of envy and hatred, of slackness and self-indulgence, of mean and greedy individualism masquerading in the rags of social service.

That is the destiny of all undisciplined community. No one who has had any practical experience of communal experiments but has knowledge of how easily the best laid plans can degenerate towards that dismal end.

The practical question to-day is how is such an unlooked-for fate to be avoided? How can the opposing conditions of freedom and discipline be achieved?

It is of course easy to cast aside the whole problem as one too dangerous and too burdensome to answer in practice. But the problem is microcosmic and presents us with the alternative of providing a pattern of peaceful living for society, or of declaring that we cannot face up to the necessity of making such a pattern. If this be the case—if we really cannot commit ourselves to the task of showing, in the small, how larger communities can live together without setting in motion those frictions whose inevitable end is war, then in common honesty we had better forego our pacifist pretensions, come to terms with the prevailing disorder, and acknowledge the necessity of war. For this business of demonstrating that peaceful life

is possible is a necessity laid upon us—to shirk it is to fail at the crucial point

Crucial indeed it is For all that Saint Paul described as “the natural man” must suffer a crucifixion before the candidate for community is truly ready to enter upon it Take your unregenerate ego into any community and see what happens to both! There is indeed the very devil to pay And that is perhaps why so hard a thinker as Gerald Heard has declared that a single person lacking in full consciousness is enough to wreck any community

That might be so if there were no such thing as the power of forgiveness or the ability of one person to bear the burdens of another Happily we all know those who are able both to forgive and to carry loads not of their own making What I want to insist here is that such rare and tried souls are the only people who are sufficiently equipped spiritually to undertake the business of forming pacifist communities The burden of responsibility falls upon them. Democracy, as Nurse Cavell might have said, is not enough Consciousness and imagination are the only supports strong enough to bear the weight of communal life, and the truth is that although pacifism is based upon conscience and the exercise of a social consciousness, there is not yet enough consciousness to go round Therefore the only reliable basis for a community of the kind now coming into being in response to the necessity of the times, will be one which has the initial vision to see that, since community is based upon a disinterested consciousness not normally to be found in those who have as yet hardly known years enough to express themselves in the terms of individualism, the essential discipline of community should be provided by the setting up of a hierarchy within the communal body It should be composed of those who are by grace and nature fitted to exercise a disinterested consciousness on behalf of the community as a whole. It

should function particularly on behalf of those who, for simple lack of social experience, are as yet lacking in communal consciousness. This council—this *Witenagemot*—is, I believe, essential to all the communities now in process of formation. Each one should have its own. Those who form it will be the true burden-bearers, the sponsors, of successful pacifist community.

LIGHTEN OUR DARKNESS

I SUPPOSE it's Hitler's fault—what isn't?—but we seem to be suffering just now from a very bad attack of goodness. I speak feelingly and probably in reaction, but I find the present pursuit and adulation of moral virtue very boring. I hope it does not mean that we are doomed to react to Hitler for the remainder of our lives

Hitler has become monstrous to the British imagination because he is without certain moral compunctions. The sense that the loss of these means the end of those moral values which have sustained European civilisation for centuries is undoubtedly the profound reason for the panic he has succeeded in creating. People who for centuries have taken certain moral values for granted, as basic and established, now find them radically unstable. The really unanswerable case against Hitler has of course been provided by himself, not by a policy of ruthlessness nor even by his cruelty and persecution, but by the quiet, resolved, and deliberate murder of his own friends in June, 1936. He became a monster, not by his legal enactments but by his defiance of them—by stepping above the law and making himself the embodiment of avenging justice, by being at once judge, jury and executioner of men who had been his intimate associates.

That crime was appalling, and every man of moral sense was appalled by it at the time, for the personification of justice which he assumed is really a sin against the majesty and justice of God. Our conception of justice is based upon respect for law and its disinterested and impersonal operation, and this respect is really derived from a traditional belief in the justice of God and its perfect impartiality. For any man, therefore, to declare himself to be the personal

embodiment of justice is complete blasphemy, and it is as a blasphemer against one of the cardinal tenets of human religion that Hitler stands indicted before the world. Hence the almost universal fear of him, outside that region wherein he appears as a saviour.

That he not only does so appear, but that in fact he has proved himself to be a saviour, was brought out very clearly in a couple of notable articles in *The Times* for 7th and 8th March [1941]. There it was made plain that black as Hitler is, bloody and full of revenge as all his major actions have been, he is also a far greater idealist, and a much more personally disinterested man than most of his critics. But where he is phenomenal is not in his desire for power but in his confessed abrogation of those moral impediments which stand between the generality of men and their desire for power. Hitler made his will to the liberation of Germany absolute, and it is as the incarnation of absolute will that he has become the terror of the world.

However, I did not set out to discuss Hitler, but rather to decry the vogue he has caused, in this country at least, of Sunday-school goodness.

On all hands now one meets with this elevation of moral virtue as the all-important requirement of the age. It has become the accepted ideal. The Churches have cashed in on it. The radio has become its unblushing instrument. Public prayers that we may all be made models of self-perfection are duly authorised. There's a regular hue and cry in pursuit of the good. This only becomes intelligible when we perceive that it arises from the need of compensation for the prevalent conscious concealment of the true. On the one hand we have propaganda, so studious in its discrimination among the known facts that the truth, the whole truth, and nothing but the truth regarding them has become mythological. On the other we have a persistent inculcation of the doctrine that as persons and as a nation

we are "Christian" and therefore "good" In this conviction it becomes the State duty of the Churches to teach us that each one of us has an ideal opportunity for becoming the very incarnation of goodness And that is the popular doctrine now current Without wanting to incite anyone to pursue evil in reaction to this reaction, I confess to finding the ambition to be so wonderfully good extremely boring

And not only boring, but greatly misleading. For the pursuit of goodness now stands in the way of something much more important the search for wisdom and understanding A man may be good within the circle of a very small number of apprehensions. That is all right so long as those apprehensions represent the limits of his intelligent consciousness, but if his circle of good is so small, so cribbed, so cabined, so confined that the incursion of truth from without completely destroys the man's integrity, then goodness has been proved to be a false lodestar and he can never again become good until he has forgotten and forsaken its pursuit in his veneration for truth

Thousands of people in Britain to-day are seeking to become models of religious virtue That may be an improvement on Hitler's effort, but actually it turns out to be not much better, and it may even be intrinsically worse, because evil pursued with intent will give evil a form, which may be cast out, but "good" that is only contraction from evil is a mere negation Such people are not acting from their humanity as imaginative beings, but merely reacting to a truly craven fear of personal calamity And fear, whether of good or evil, is the worst of all guides to human conduct It withers up the soul, prevents its living expression, confines the creature within himself, and frustrates the generous purposes of Life itself

The will to good, in the limited, behaviourist or authoritarian mode now so much in fashion, is misleading

because, being self-regarding, it soon turns to evil in the shape of self-righteousness. And self-righteousness is very precisely what is *not* wanted by this country to-day. What *is* wanted is the exercise of the imaginative intelligence which can look upon both the activities of human good and human evil without fear and become capable of understanding the underlying and psychological causes of human action. Only by understanding shall we overcome the plagues that beset us. mere reaction to them is as ineffective as the repetition of incantations was to the people of London in 1665. "Lord, have mercy upon us" is a good prayer and worthy of all repetition, but "Lighten our darkness we beseech Thee, O Lord," is much better, particularly in days of mental, spiritual, and physical black-out. "Why callest thou me good?" We do not need to be compelled to the impossible stasis of being good. We need to know and to understand and to act upon understanding.

Perhaps the chief reason why this unattached, self-conscious, and rather mean desire to be good is so much to be deplored is that it neglects the wisdom and understanding of human behaviour known always by great religion but now made secularly available by the researches of modern psychology. Much knowledge and understanding of the springs of human action have been discovered in the last decade or so by the study of child-life of criminality and its causes, by psychological analysis and by the patient study of social science. None of these by themselves is sufficient to prevent man from reverting to barbarism and indulging in his old habit of trying to cure his neuroses by war. But they have pointed collectively in the direction of enlightenment and human salvation. That we should neglect the need for their extension to the fields of political and national behaviour, and retire upon the platitudinous will to individual good, is really a regression and not at all the discovery of religion it

pretended to be by those who are now teaching orthodox perfectionism. Hitler may be and is a very bad man. You and I may be very good. But unless we are capable of seeing him as resultant, and therefore not phenomenal, we shall fail to solve the problem of our time and destiny, and the war we are waging against him will in effect be quite endless. For the man may be set aside, as Kaiser Wilhelm was, but if the causes of which he is the effect and embodiment are not understood, then the springs of his evil power will remain hidden until they give birth to fresh manifestations which will again appear phenomenal. "Resist not Evil" implies the power to assess, to discount, and ultimately to assimilate evil until it becomes transformed. Evil will only be fought by those to whom it appears as reality. But God is the only reality. And the psychological tragedy of war is apparent when appearance fights appearance while reality or truth is openly crucified by priestly propaganda that nails human intelligence to half-truths and makes the halo of human suffering its crown of glory. There is only one war worth fighting to-day. It is not war for the recovery of personal or national or even international good, but for the recovery of truth. When we can open the windows of our minds to the whole truth, we shall know evil for what it is worth, and discover that, like darkness, it is assimilated by light. Then the tree of the knowledge of good and evil will no longer obsess us and we shall again begin to eat of the tree of life.

BACK THE BISHOP

THE proposal made in this magazine that steps should be taken to see whether, by mutual consent, the horrors of civil bombing could not be brought to an end, recently received the powerful support of the Bishop of Chichester's letter to *The Times* in which he proposed an attempt to reach agreement with the Germans to stop night bombing. The plea of course had a mixed reception, for fighting is an occupation which is absorbing and warnings about method are seldom heard before the combatants are tired. One astounding comment on the Bishop's plea was to be found in a line of verse that appeared in a popular London daily: "Enslaved by conscience, how can we be free?" As who should say. servants of God must be slaves of the Devil, a belief not so far from popular credence to-day as might be supposed

But in the mind of every decent person the question whether it is essential to the military advantage on either side that numberless civilians should be blasted out of existence is truly and literally a burning one "We can take it" has become a slogan, and it expresses a noble sentiment But it does not express much more, for we can "take" earthquake or pestilence or starvation, and the ability does not prevent a rational human being from doing all he can to avoid them It would be the extreme of pessimism, therefore, to suppose that the question whether nothing be done to stop the horror of civil bombing is confined to any particular group or section of society, the matter has become so grievous that the question in some form now vexes the mind of every sentient person It would be a libel on any member of the Government to say that he regarded the nightly blasting and burning of

unarmed persons as a normal and justifiable form of war. Such a state of affairs is admittedly outrageous, and one which any man in his senses would put an end to at once—if he could.

There's the rub. Because we are involved in what is called—but what I hope to show is miscalled—"total war", it is generally believed that every scientific device of destruction must be accepted as necessary and therefore indispensable. People tend to think that in regard to method, our own actions must be reciprocal to the action of the enemy. Any suggestion that this is not so is commonly regarded as savouring of idealism and showing sentimental weakness that would make a present to the enemy of an unfair advantage. Let us therefore say clearly that nothing can be done about bombing which makes, or even seems to make, for military advantage to the enemy.

That is our agreed premise. Would an agreement to stop night-bombing do that? We think not. On the contrary, such an offer, made in good faith, perhaps through the mediation of the Pope, would have a moral effect upon the conscience of the world that would actually be of the best possible service to the British cause at the present time. Moreover, it might quite conceivably create more dissension in the ranks of the enemy than anything else.

"But you can't trust Hitler." Granted. Who wants to? Hitler, unbelievable as it may sound, is not the only pebble on the beach. Sooner or later our actions have got to be convincing to the German people, who must be distinguished from Hitler and Hitlerism if the war is not to be one of extermination. Terrorisation *may* be a convincing argument to Germans. We don't believe it, because we are certain it is not to us. We believe it to be futile on both sides—worse than futile, actively exacerbating, strengthening the will to resist and making for a blind policy of unrestrained retaliation. "Do your damndest—

and we will do ours", which is apparently our only message to Germany, may sound very courageous, resolute and Churchillian, but it is not the language of statesmanship and policy—it betrays a temper for which there may be adequate and obvious reasons, but in all our resentment, loathing, and mistrust of Hitler, Goebbels and Co., we should be sensible enough to remember that neither Germany nor ourselves is ready to act according to such a precept. Many accepted rules of war still govern the Nazis and ourselves. Generally speaking, prisoners of war are not starved, tortured, or put to death, but fed, housed, and clothed by their enemies. U-boat commanders are constantly acting with humane consideration for the crews of torpedoed vessels, and it is common knowledge that the Air Forces on both sides have their own code of chivalry. The captured airman, here and in Germany, is most often treated with kindness and courtesy provided he has "put up a good show" and come down in fair fight. In actual fact, fair fight is the criterion of behaviour in war accepted by the fighting man. The old tag that says "All's fair in love and war" is simply not accepted as true of war even now. Men can, and sometimes do, behave as brute beasts, but he would be a liar and a traducer of the human race who argued that the necessity of "total war" required the fighting man to act with the maximum of inhumanity, and concluded that barbarity was the measure of fighting efficiency.

Clearly then there remain limits, in the actual conduct of war, beyond which both we and the Germans are—at present at any rate—unwilling to go. The reason for these self-imposed limitations are many and debatable, but their nature does not affect the fact that they are still conformed to by both sides in ninety-nine cases out of a hundred. That is the fact we are concerned here to establish. To state it is not to whitewash the enemy or even mitigate

hatred of him. it is simply to insist upon the truth. Our contention is that there are still humane restraints in the conduct of war which are now being respected by the Germans and by ourselves. These are concessions to civilised tradition. they denote acceptance of cardinal requirements of civilisation and are made irrespective of military advantage which might accrue from their abandonment. And our point is that if, in spite of all, these can be made, other restraints, even more necessary, can be agreed upon.

Now if it is agreed that there are *any* restraints still exercised in the conduct of war, the argument that "total war" necessarily implies the use of every destructive method that might be of military or economic advantage, breaks down. Because poison-gas is deadly, it does not follow that poison-gas will be used in this war. Because bacteriological warfare might be overwhelmingly successful, it does not follow that it is bound to be practised. The tactics and strategy of modern war are ultimately subject to the will and consent of common people, and that which outrages their common feelings is likely to fail of its purpose simply because what outrages the moral sense of the ordinary man cannot long be persisted in.

It would appear to-day that if the Western peoples are to save themselves from something desperately like race suicide they must quickly discover some point in the conduct of their conflict at which they will impose upon themselves conscious self-restraint. Such a point is reached when the universal conscience of mankind is shocked by the horrors of night-bombing. In this matter an act of self-criticism now made would be historic in the annals of the race, for it would mark the point at which man regained a lost control of his own destiny. It would indicate the revolutionary point at which he called a halt to that period of his evolution during which, for want of conscious

control, he was driven to death by the very things he had made for his service. Man has forgotten wisdom in his pursuit of knowledge. In his devotion to things he has lost his sense of human proportion and failed to uphold the criterion of the good life. Lacking this criterion, his faith in "Progress" has ended in mere progression—a Rake's Progress. Scientific knowledge, overriding divine wisdom and human understanding, has made the pursuit of knowledge a deluding obsession, for knowledge pursued exclusively turns out to be an all-licensed fool who leads mankind with captive balloon and wailing hooter to the borders of self-destruction.

Only by the exercise of some ascetic act of restraint, testifying to the fact that man has consciously recovered the desire to control his own destiny, can we turn from this disastrous path.

Is not the moment ripe for such an act of human prudence? The bombing of congested cities by night is surely a crime against mankind whoever commits it. Whoever will say this with authority and act upon his conviction will be a deliverer of the sort inarticulate millions are now waiting for. The proof of the pudding is in the eating: we know now that this war will not be won by the destruction of either London or Berlin. What is happening in these cities and others comparable to them resembles the infuriated and irresponsible brick-slinging of a couple of glasshouse inhabitants, and civilisation is, in fact, a crystal palace. The war will not be won by destroying it. On the contrary, the war can only be won by preserving it. It is time to resist the ensnaring voice of the fatalist who pleads that whatever is is inevitable and all things must pursue their destined course to damnation. It is time to think in terms of actuality and to cease from thinking in terms of rhetorical slogans. This does not mean that the war is not to be continued or the will to victory abated, but it

does mean that those involved in the war should make themselves responsible for the method of its conduct. It does mean that civilian bombing should be stopped, by agreement if possible, by example if necessary. As the Bishop of Chichester proposed, such an offer should be made immediately. Would it not be made by anyone with sufficient prescience to see a moral advantage when it was within his grasp? Mr Churchill is barking up the wrong tree when he waves his hat and his cigar as wands of transformation over the desolated homes of the British proletariat. Let him throw his hat into the flames and put on his considering cap. The day he can tell the people that he is doing everything in his power to abate the horrors of what is not war but merely civilian massacre, he will achieve a victory over himself which history will discover to have been a victory also over Hitler.

AN APPRECIATION OF THE POEMS OF JOHN DONNE

TO anyone interested in physiognomy the portrait of John Donne as a youth of eighteen is interesting. The forehead is broad and receding the eyes are large and widely set apart the cheek-bones high and prominent. the nose has a look of obstinacy the mouth is big, yet controlled, and the chin is of that refined character which distinguished the Elizabethans and contrasts so pleasingly with the heavy jowl of simian associations. The preponderance of space between the eyes and lips seems to indicate a dominantly emotional nature. Altogether it is a very attractive, though not handsome, face intelligence and lovable frankness are revealed in the expression, its honesty and courage must have moved many a grown woman to admiration, and some to something more.

One feels that only that man could have written Donne's love poems, and in the thought one happens upon a secret of Donne's peculiar appeal, for in an especial sense only he could have written them. He has been blamed by many critics for the faults common to his day, faults which, of course, showed themselves in his writings as the different faults of different times denote the traces of mortality in all works of art, but in their power to reveal personality Donne's poems are unique. And there is every reason for this. No man more consistently wrote poetry with the sole purpose of easing his heart than Donne. No poet ever had the public (that miscellaneous collection of individuals with which it is impossible to be intimate) less in mind. No whole-hearted lover ever strove, on the one hand, with such passionate eagerness to strip language of its

frills and furbelows in the desire to make it yield the image of a naked, burning heart, or, on the other, delighted to make words scintillate with such light by packing into a tinket-box of verse such a heaped mass of jewels. The seemingly indiscriminate piling of image on metaphor which makes a first reading of his poems an intellectual obstacle-course ultimately loses all its incongruity, for we come to see that this strange track was not so much deliberately chosen, as taken to show that any and every path led him to the same end. The very obstacles were made to serve, as in his life they did, for the obstacles to his love were constantly made the occasions of these poems. Donne was determined to "get there" as quickly as possible, and, if he sometimes tripped over himself in his impatience, the impatience itself was often the cause of his success. "Busy old fool!" and, "For God's sake hold your tongue!" he cries where, had he stopped to consider the requirements of pedantry, we might have been made to suffer some such awfulness as "Thou foolish one," and "I pray you silence keep." If ever poetry was self-expressive it was in Donne. He gave himself and hid nothing.

Donne did supremely what every honest young maker of verses tries to do—he opened his heart upon personal occasions and showed thereby a universal harmony. The emotions of young poets are usually of insufficient power to overflow the vessel in which they begin to well up. Donne's delight so triumphantly overflows that he will remain the envy of lovers through all ages. Lesser poets at the high tides of life are like swimmers who cannot master the waves of feeling and are therefore proud to bob like corks in the sea of their own emotions—at best they can but float, happily in love with love or with some visionary beauty which makes their hearts ache for a romantic world of which this is only the shadow, but navigation of the waters—we do not ask it of them.

Donne's swimming is never without direction. When he takes to the water it is to wonder what he did before he entered it. When he dives it is for a pearl he has already seen. His directness has the mortal health of a lover's arms about a love-sick girl. He will rob the heavens of their treasure to praise a dimple, but it is the dimple and not the treasure of heaven that remains his theme. The object of his affections may be questioned with moral interrogations, but not the truth or reality of his love. Other poets fill the eye, enchant the ear, or charm the senses with persuasive semblances. Full nakedness is Donne's ambition. "naked truth displayed" is his ideal of beauty.

Whenever a passionate lover does this he will not be thought "quite nice" according to the polite standards of drawing-room criticism. People who have been unfortunate in their youth and bear about with them an unconscious resentment on account of their misfortunes will congregate in the drawing-rooms of literature and discuss the exact point at which such poems pass the limits of decency. Peeping Tom will be there with many a half-told tale of the poet's life, which the company will commission him to put on record as a warning to the younger generation, while they, dear young people, hide the poems under their pillows. So all will be happy. But the common charge that Donne showed want of taste can only be answered properly by putting the question back of Donne's intention. If he intended these poems for any beyond the circle of his intimate friends, he certainly wrote them for the secluded eyes of lovers, and if asked where they might suitably be read, he would, I fancy, have indicated rooms a little nearer heaven than the natural home of scandal. Donne wrote a splendid poem about a flea. The flea, for good reasons, is happily no longer a subject of common interest, but the natural refinement of Donne is made obvious by the consideration that a

paraphrase of this poem would reduce it to vulgarity. Donne's power of treating the intimacies of love and sustaining his argument upon the altitudes of taste is indeed miraculous, and the fact that he revealed this power will not be disputed by anyone who knows the difference between feeling and the want of it, or between poetry and prose. Take any one of the famous elegies and convert it into prose, it is probable that the work will deserve the attention of the public hangman, but poetry exists for the express purpose of saying things impossible to prose, and Donne succeeded in saying tastefully things hitherto unattempted in English verse. Three gifts he had for this alchemic art: passion, honesty, and fancy. Possessed in his measure, the first two place him high above the reach of ill taste, the last is like a gift of sunlight making happy what is already good and true.

Minds that have a congenital bias against strong feeling will never be happy with John Donne. They will always prefer the Dean to the poet. To them he must ever be "crabbed and metaphysical", for they will never understand what it is that sometimes makes a lover completely inarticulate. The emotions that radiate a gentle warmth leave their possessor free to confess them with ease and fluency, control being easy where there is little to control, but the strongest feelings prompt to action rather than words. The lovers and haters of Donne (for whom less temperate feelings are unnatural) will always fall unconsciously into the camps of those for whom control is the secret of art, and those for whom the informing energy is the highest concern. Poetry, like every living thing, continually oscillates between exuberance and economy. Had Donne felt less, he would certainly have been more easily intelligible, but the very intensity of his passion compelled him to an economy which is often so startling that the reader is sometimes made more conscious of the

dramatic situation than of the emotional content of the poem

“Meet me at London, then,
Twenty days hence, and thou shalt see
Me fresher, and more fat, by being with men,
Than if I had stayed still with her and thee ”

Thus he addresses his own heart. Intensity has driven him to impersonate a bodily organ, it has created a full-staged dramatic situation where he can meet the figure of his own heart and confront it as an adversary, and it is the same intensity, ever making for realisation, that constrains him to use planets and worlds, the sea, the phoenix, mandrakes, and even the problems of geometry for a concrete image of his love. Donne was master of his own method. He could have made a love poem about a dustbin without allowing it to be the mere exercise of puerile fancy. He would never have so hopelessly lost his sense of values as to write like a modern impressionist laboriously trying to inflate his unwilling sympathies on behalf of the dustbin, he would have seized imaginatively upon the object and dragged from it its essential nature—decay—simply because it happened to ignite the fuel of an imagination ever ready for combustion.

The secret of the wit which was such an intellectual delight to his contemporaries, and has been the cause of such painful peregrinations by less nimble minds, lies merely in the fact that there was a very ready correspondence between Donne's heart and mind. The passion that would have induced swooning in some inflamed his marvellous intellect and made it active as a grasshopper. If there is a criticism to be made in this connection it is that he was insufficiently sensuous. But emotion is free to interpret itself variously, and the sublimation of the senses by intellectual apprehension is man's unique power, so that if there is any strain in Donne's use of his intellect, he is

all on the side of the angels The head on the shoulders of this wonderful figure was always the crown and sovereign of it

It were waste of time to lay too heavy an axe about those struts of convention, already rotting to decay, which uphold the walls of constancy in youthful love and are placed across the path of Donne's admirers The adulation of the ivy and the limpet in affairs of the heart has long been extravagant Mere fickleness is never admirable, but why youth should be carefully apprenticed in the schools of learning, work, and manners, yet be expected to reach full-fledged maturity of love in a moment of time, is a mystery known only to the very prudent Let it suffice to say that the men and women of our veneration learnt wisdom otherwise Let us quietly insist that Donne loved many women and passed through all the stages of love's growth trailing these poems as clouds of glory in his path

"We can die by it, if not live by love,
And if unfit for tombs and hearse
Our legend be, it will be fit for verse"

Fit indeed it proved His theme was "accepted of song", whether it was the youthful cynicism which praised or derided fickleness, the love forbid by conventional morality, but acclaimed of nature, or that rapt, complete sense of divine correspondency which provoked such a poem as "The Ecstasy".

There is little question that the youth who wrote these poems gave greater praise to life than the Dean who filled St Paul's with a melancholy which it holds to this day Time passes just judgment, and that sternest arbiter of taste has declared Donne's title to immortality to rest far more securely upon those secular poems, thrown out with white-hot, undiminishable heat from the furnace of his imagination, than upon the death-cold religious poems which stand like wrought-iron railings about a silent and

neglected tomb That survival of mediævalism, that spiritual habitation filled with monstrous gaigoyles, all pointing inwards, which passed for a church in Donne's time, was never the true home of his rich heart

Life is inexorable Wedded to truth, she compels our attention to her marriage though we scorn it again and again I could fancy that through the voice of the early Donne she appealed to man to consider the indissolubility of body and soul upon earth, but in the pride of his possession of a soul he has for centuries been content to relegate his body to the level of an ass beneath its rider And now, with its hands full of painful instruments, science comes to probe the hidden recesses of the mind, finding there the ghosts of madness, lust and cruelty with the helm and mainsheet in their hands, steering man's hapless craft whither he would not, and with averted face swears that he does not go There is a stage in sickness when the sufferer passes beyond the power of sunlight, air and normal living to effect his restoration and the applied knowledge of the surgeon is required Science applied to conduct is such a surgeon, and who shall say whether or not he is now our need? Be that as it may, science cannot add one cubit to the stature of our life, and Donne's theology only represents his effort at scientific self-analysis

In a passage of *The Marriage of Heaven and Hell* Blake comments upon the works of one who had succeeded in sterilising his own emotions He says, "It is but time lost to converse with you whose works are only analytics" Science may, nay, must analyse, but there can be no life without emotion, and life itself is true art's highest concern That is why Donne's love poems remain of the highest value, while the theological writings over which he spent so much time are of so much lesser value Poetry is the celebration of the marriage between instinct and imagination Donne's celebration of the marriage of body and

soul is to be esteemed in an altogether higher category of values than the benefits accruing from applied scientific knowledge. He enables us to participate in that marriage and through our imaginations to enjoy it in its living intensity. He is not only the dispenser of spiritual health, he provides the food whereby that health is maintained.

His place among "the splendours of the firmament of time" is well assured. The pole-star is by no means the brightest of those splendours which the breath of Time holds suspended above our heads, but to the navigator it has a value and an importance which brighter planets cannot eclipse. The position of John Donne, amid the constellated glory of English love poetry, seems to me akin. This is larger, that is easier to look upon, and yonder is one that glows more with colour than with light, but if it is navigation we are interested in, we shall do well to crane our necks and look right above our heads. Yet even that effort may be forestalled if we first consult the compass of our hearts, for the true compass can hardly fail to respond immediately to so strong a magnet as that pole-star among love poets, the "crabbed and metaphysical" John Donne.

SLEEPING AND WAKING

THE perception of truth always comes with a sense of awakening. We wake to recognise. However strange the sudden appearance of truth may be, in itself it is perfectly familiar. We come to it as a sailor to his own port, we know it as certainly as we know a friend's face in a crowd, this is what we have sought even without knowing what we were seeking. Yet with this sense of complete familiarity there is the great and sudden sense of awakening. A film, like the veil of sleep, falls from our eyes. Suddenly we are transported on to higher ground, and with assurance we know the way.

This fitful process of moving from one level of consciousness to a higher is the manner of man's whole spiritual progression. As the tree at its top puts forth a bud that must risk its life at a higher point than any bud upon the tree has known before, so the consciousness of man is required to move upon ever loftier altitudes. To live properly he must enter momentarily upon the future with complete confidence, and this he can only do in the strength of vision, for vision is the recognition of the hitherto unknown, and the true life of consciousness is a recurring series of moments of recognition. Such a moment of vision—such a budding upon the tree of life—was the moment when Jesus perceived God as his father. Then, for the first time, man was at home in the world, fraternally related to the whole cosmos. Then, for the first time, creation gave back to the creator the perfect image of his design. That achievement of vision remains unsurpassed. It is because no one has believed the truth that Jesus believed, with the simple and absolute recognition that was his, that he remains a unique figure in the history of man and has

been worshipped as a mythological and divine being. But it is impossible for human consciousness to recede from the point he attained, and although the fatherhood of God may now mean truth or complete error to men, according as it is imaginatively or rationally apprehended, it is to that apex of recognition that human consciousness aspires, and will continue to aspire. For man cannot go back upon himself: the tree cannot deny its utmost bud: the vision seen by one man makes a landmark for the world.

The question which torments the mind of man is: can vision be believed? And the answer is that it can only be believed by those who see it. When, as we say, the truth "dawns" upon us, we do not wonder about it, we are not dubious, we say that we know. But our conviction is, in itself, quite unpersuasive to another. Unless we can truly incarnate our vision, he must have his own, and when he has had it he will need no persuasion. The effort to persuade men into any kind of belief is wholly misguided, for when we do not know the truth all tales about it are fabulous, and when we see the truth we cannot disbelieve it: that is an impossibility. Our whole concern then should be to incarnate the vision, that is, to do the works which follow naturally upon it.

The poet gives us a perfect example of what our behaviour should be. He sees, but he does not thereupon run about trying to persuade other people to his point of view. He creates an image of what he has seen, he makes something that embodies the event, and his poem becomes a reflection of the vital truth of his individual experience. Then, and not till then, has the truth become incarnate. Then it is persuasive, for if we in turn have imagination, we are, through the reflection, able to receive and acknowledge the light. The poet does not write to persuade, but to record. He is the true historian of man's spiritual progress: his work is to record the achieved moments of the soul.

One of the finest examples of the awakening of the soul to truth is to be found in Keats's *Ode to a Nightingale*. That it was an awakening is shown very clearly by the conclusion

"Was it a vision, or a waking dream?
Fled is that music —Do I wake or sleep?"

Those are obviously the words of one who has seen something with such intensity he wonders whether the evidence of his physical eyes can now be believed. Coming back from the realms of vision, he stands for a moment like a swimmer on the shore, too dazed by the waves to recognise the familiar. Coming suddenly upon us as the lines do, while the vision is still freshly with us, they seem at first hardly to belong to the poem—to be a comment upon it, almost an afterthought. But that is a superficial impression. Those questions are truly integral, for they complete the circle of experience and bring us—as all truly lived spiritual experiences bring us—back to earth. Without those lines the poem would be incomplete, for they express the authentic and inevitable wonder the visionary always feels upon his return. Keats came back, like Moses from the mount, with the glory round about him, and dazzled by the light he cries. "Was it a vision, or a waking dream?"

To apply the question is a good test. Do you believe it was a vision, or a waking dream? Was it a sudden accession of increased consciousness, or was it a lapse from fully awakened consciousness to a state of dream? No doubt most people to-day believe that Keats's experience was of the nature of a lapse. Many would read us treatises on the emergence of the subconscious—without understanding what they read. The vulgar idea of the poet as a mere dreamer would find confirmation in the very question, and the modernist, who imagines himself to be beyond the reach of what he calls "romanticism", would probably agree with the vulgar in believing Keats's con-

sciousness at the time to be subnormal So that to say, as we shall now say, that this condition—whatever it was—was *the* condition of consciousness imperative to the apprehension of truth, is to say something that will be scouted by nine people out of ten

Beside that conclusion let us place the fact that here we have one of the greatest poems in the world—one of the undisputed glories of English literature Can men gather figs from thistles? Can an inferior state of consciousness produce what is in itself acknowledged to be fruit of the highest consciousness? Either the poem must be rejected as inferior, or the state of mind in which it was written acknowledged as supreme Poetry is miraculous, but not in the sense that it would be if it were an effect without due cause it transcends, but it does not disobey the laws of rationality Poetry we have said records the historic progress of the soul, so we must either abandon the theory of lapse, or the poem

We have the advantage over Keats at the moment when he had just finished the poem in that we now know it for what it was We can test it objectively But the question was a very real one to him “Was it a vision, or a waking dream?” is no mere rhetorical expression of surprise Keats was deeply concerned to discover the validity of his experience At the moment he only knew that something wonderful had happened to him What was it? Had he been awakened to the perception of imaginative reality—had he seen inner reality existing in its own eternity beyond the realm of transient appearances? Or had he slept and wandered in the garden of faded memory? It was a terrific question

Let us go back and examine the steps of his progress. He had begun upon earth in the ferment of personal desire:

“My heart aches, and a drowsy numbness pains
My sense, as though of hemlock I had drunk”.

There is sleep there a drowsiness almost like the approach of death. There is the desire of death—"That I might drink, and leave the world unseen"—but there is love transcending death—"Away! away! for I will fly to thee"—and by the time he reaches the fourth stanza he has achieved complete detachment from all personal craving now his spirit is full of worship and he is lifted by the strength of pure passion into the realm of adoration "Already with thee". Thus he has attained to identification with the object of his love, and immediately he realises its eternal identity—"immortal Bird"—and so becomes detached from it again, returning to his "sole self", new-born by the experience, and "forlorn", as a new-born child is forlorn, wondering, as a child might wonder, whether his realisation of the world of common day were a sleep or an awakening.

The movement is according to the pattern of all visionary experience. Compare it with the first poem of Blake's *Songs of Innocence* where, as Mr Wicksteed has pointed out, the whole process of incarnation is perfectly symbolised. there is the same ascent, the same recognition, the same moment of identification, and the same return to earth. The order is of course the order of all creative action and is symbolic of every fully realised sexual experience. This love process lies at the heart of reality, and without it reality cannot be known. That is what we, of the modern scientific world, have forgotten. We believe that reality can be known unemotionally—that if we only piece the parts of knowledge together with sufficient care then we shall really know the truth. We act as if the creative process itself were an irrelevant and rather tiresome handicap to real knowledge—something the wise man is wise to overlook, so we inverse the eternal order which puts all knowledge in dependence upon consciousness, and putting knowledge first, endeavour to make consciousness trivial.

We succeed in making it chaotic. Our energetic strident will to knowledge defeats itself, for the receptive soul alone has knowledge of reality, and when the mind becomes noisy and clamorous the soul is deafened. It cannot hear the intimations of truth, which are usually whispered.

Blake could have answered Keats's question better than any man of his day, for what he describes as "visions of Eternity" were the delight of his life and the source of all his tremendous activity. Not that Keats himself was long in need of an answer. In what is very probably the next poem he wrote, the *Ode on a Grecian Urn*, the answer is given with a directness almost didactic. "Beauty is truth, truth, beauty." Keats is persuaded that what the imagination seizes upon as beauty must be truth, and the validity of his imaginative experience with the nightingale is thereby wholly established. The nightingale ode ends with a question, the *Ode on a Grecian Urn* answers it, the power of imagination is all its theme. The poems are naturally sequent.

For Blake, the sleep of unconsciousness was the sleep of death. This sleep is the subject of his greatest poem, which begins

"Of the Sleep of Ulro! and of the passage through
Eternal Death! and of the awakening to Eternal Life"

The poem itself comes to him after the manner of an awakening

"This theme calls me in sleep night after night, & ev'ry morn
Awakes me at sun-rise, then I see the Saviour over me
Spreading his beams of love, & dictating the words of this mild
song
'Awake! awake O sleeper of the land of shadows '"

Death, sleep, vegetative life and spiritual awakening were for Blake four distinct conditions which mortals suffered or enjoyed

The sun was for him the saviour from sleep. when we

have learned to bear his "beams of love", "the cloud" of mortality (which enfolds us like a womb) "will vanish" and "we shall hear his voice" The symbolism is recurrent It is the sun that loves the earth and woos it into fructifying life So it is that the earth, upon which the sun shines, becomes "the Garden of Beulah", "a mild and pleasant rest given in mercy to those who sleep" Man reposes from Eternity in the sleep of Time At the end of *Jerusalem* he is described as "returning wearied Into the Planetary lives of Years, Months, Days & Hours, *reposing*, And then *Awaking* into his Bosom in the Life of Immortality"

Do we sleep or wake? It is the great question The most awakened souls seem to have been most conscious of their own sleep Blake, Wordsworth, Shelley—the idea of awakening from the dream of life is one that haunts them The Eternal, says Blake, is ever present to the wise Therefore their movements from lower to higher altitudes of consciousness are constant their angels ascend and descend Jacob's Ladder, and at the foot they seem to sleep Just as there are levels of consciousness in sleep (to be glimpsed in the moments between sleep and waking), so there are levels of waking consciousness They live most who are most constantly aware of them.

WHAT DOES DEATH MEAN TO YOU?

I THE ABSTRACT IDEA

THE title calls for apology, for the question is personal, indeed it is almost impertinent. My apology is this. I want, if possible, to avoid the generalisations which current intellectual sophistry is ready to offer in place of conviction. What people think about death is usually not very interesting because so often it is nothing but a *réchauffé* of opinions, and therefore, properly speaking, not thought at all, on the other hand, what they feel in the presence of death is more than interesting, it is deeply moving. I want if I can to find out what people feel about death. I want to present as simply as possible my own convictions. I want to get below the rationalism, indifference, and cynicism which, over large portions of the globe, at present obscure the truth.

The question invites a tremendous effort of self-examination. For my part, I know that unless I can give a true record of my own experience and make a simple interrogation of my own consciousness, I shall have nothing profitable to say. And the temptation to abstraction is fierce. Yet ultimately, what does it matter to you or to me what a million men have thought about death? Each of us has to die his own death. The only wisdom of final value to us is that which we have learnt by experience, or has been so absorbed by consciousness as to have become our own. In the face of death, all dogma, all precept is but the echo of a distant sound. To discover what death means, it is our own hearts we have to search, our own experience we must plumb, the evidences of our own senses that is required.

What does death mean to me? As a matter of *fact*, it

means simply nothing. If I am to rely upon the evidence of my senses, they report that death means individual nothingness. I have reason to believe that a shell once dropped on the parapet of a trench in France and that its explosion threw me across the trench. I say I have reason to believe this but my evidence of the fact would not be accepted in a court of law, for it is merely what I was told when I awoke four hours later gazing at the sky. Of the event itself, and of those four hours, I was, and am, as unconscious as a child unborn. So far as the record of consciousness is concerned, I was dead, and that death was a blank, a gap in existence without dream or impression of any kind. And the experience of seeming obliteration has been repeated under the influence of an anæsthetic. My senses report that death is a nothingness.

A moment's consideration will show that they could not well report anything else. Any sense destroyed reports a nothingness where before there was sensation, we do not need experience to teach us that animate life is dependent upon sensation. But—and here we enter upon the fringe of the whole vast problem—I know that my life, here and now, is not purely a matter of sensation. Consciousness, though it acts by means of the organs of sensation, is greater than they and is in large measure their governor and director, and the creative imagination, which is the activity of consciousness, is positively independent of sensation. So it appears that, here and now, I am in possession of greater faculties than can be bounded by sensation. What is the meaning of these? If they have being, then they have importance. If they have life that is not bounded by the senses, then I am more than a sense-organ, and if I am more than a sense-organ then it is useless to appeal to the senses for the last word concerning death.

Let us attempt to be even simpler. Why do we embrace life and shun death? Because life is pleasant and death

painful in its action. Man wants to be happy, and so long as life holds the prospect of happiness he clings to it. He will cling to it even after the conscious prospect of happiness has gone, for the unconscious instincts have formed the habit of pursuing happiness and will continue the pursuit long after the conscious mind has abandoned hope. The suicide has to murder his instincts before destroying himself.

And what is the simplest and most elementary form of happiness? Surely the gratification of the senses, to be observed in the child at its mother's breast. Here is happiness at its human source—the appeasement of hunger. That is what all life is, the appeasement of hunger. The whole of human life is just the sublimation of this simple desire for enjoyment, the lifting of this passion for self-gratification from elementary to higher and higher levels of experience until metamorphosis takes place and the love that “seeketh only self to please, to bind another to its delight” becomes the love that

“seeketh not Itself to please
Nor for itself hath any care,
But for another gives its ease
And builds a Heaven in Hell's despair ”

Life is desirable to us only while we want to exercise, in one form or another, the hunger of love. For love is life, and there is no life apart from love.

It would be unnecessary to state such platitudes were it not for the fact that abstract ideas have become the bane of modern thought. Death is abstracted from life and regarded as pure phenomenon. It becomes an intellectual idea, and people capable of holding the idea deceive themselves into thinking they have faced death. They have, on the contrary, merely thrust reality from their minds in order to contemplate their own substitutes for it. The sovereign way to destroy the real idea of death is to abstract all thought

of love from life, and then to regard death as a fact unrelated to feeling. For apart from love, death is quite meaningless. But so is life. Why then should we persuade ourselves that it is honest to regard death dispassionately? Louder than any other, death challenges love. Do we answer that challenge by pretending that love is not involved?

During the last half-century the effort to abstract the idea of death and treat it from the standpoint of science has become implicit in most of our Western literature. Just because death has not objective existence this pseudo-scientific effort is, of course, entirely vain. Strictly speaking, science does not know of death, but only of change, for science uses the word death only to connote a natural process, common to every form of life—a part of the cycle of life to be observed in all nature. Seed, shoot, bud, flower, fruit, seed, is the complete cycle. Why regard any one of these changes as climacteric?

Apart from human consciousness there is no reason why death should not be regarded simply as a fact, and science, being concerned with facts, and having nothing to do with the effects of human consciousness upon fact—science, in short, being objective, or not science—is right to regard death merely as a fact. The matter for wonder is that human beings, in their craving for factual certainty, should have failed to see that the most momentous issues of their lives must remain for ever outside the reach of science—the strange thing is that man, with all the creations of his own imagination surrounding him, should fail to observe that what gave birth to each one of these is an activity of life beyond the reach of science. This only serves to show how bewitched by the dicta of science Western man has become. In a scientific era he can only receive instruction from science. With the foundering of his religious faith, crazily overweighted with dogma and bearing charts of a mythological world, he found himself in such a sea of despair he

clutched at every straw of fact floating above the flood, and forgot that the use of his own limbs might prove his saving. We are still moving on the tide of reaction to the acceptance of religious dogma for truth, and part of this reaction takes the very reasonable form of disbelief in any kind of authoritative statement about death, other than that which science pronounces. For my part I would not change that movement if I could: I would only accelerate it by restoring belief in the validity of faith. Agnosticism is the natural and honest attitude to dogma that stands by its historic truth and has proved to be historically untrue. Agnosticism is an admirable attitude, provided it is maintained in humility, for it places the burden of conviction upon faith (which is the only ground of religious conviction) and thus prevents pseudo-religious credulity from attempting to palm off the evidence of reason as valid for faith. But agnosticism is a negative and becomes detestable when it grows proud and wants to claim for itself the attributes that belong only to a positive. Yet this is what it has done recently, and the assumption usually goes unchallenged. Rationalism has arrogated to itself the status of religious belief and made its own inherent limitation the bound of truth.

II THE INADEQUACY OF RATIONALISM

IN the foregoing I endeavoured to show that an impersonal attitude to death could be maintained only if we abstracted the idea from experience and treated the affections of the heart as matter for pure reason. I contended that what is thought to be a realistic or scientific attitude was an intellectual pose and could not be adopted save by a misunderstanding of the province of science, since death has no objective existence and is, for human beings, without meaning except as subjective experience.

I now want to show that the prevailing indifference to subjective experience is due to a mistaken belief in the validity of objective truth—a belief fostered by our natural disinclination to face painful reality.

Indifference to death is now professed everywhere. It is a commonplace of our literature. It is apparent in our customs. The show of mourning for the dead has come to be regarded in England as slightly vulgar, to be condoned only among the poor and ignorant. Mourning of any kind is, socially speaking, *de trop*. Unwanted are those who mourn, for they are a social nuisance. Blank unmeaning ignorance is generally felt to be the unhappy but unavoidable portion of the bereaved, and it is unattractive. We wish to be kind to the bereaved, for they have suffered misfortune, but we do not expect to be called upon to share their grief, for, in our view, that is to make bad worse.

Professed ignorance in the face of death has now taken the place of religious belief. This ignorance, hardening into a negative dogma by means of the acceptance of scientific fact, declares that the destiny of the individual at death cannot certainly be known, but that all probability points to extinction, and this "probable" of science has become a sort of standard of intellectual integrity. "the best minds" of the day say "probably", and intellectual snobbery accepts the "probable" as dogmatic. Hence the decay of mourning which, if carefully traced, can be shown to have proceeded all through the last half-century, step by step in precise exactness with the growing acceptance of purely rational ideas. And if we believe the dead at death are extinct, then mourning has lost its historic *raison d'être* and becomes a survival, necessarily insincere. But this thought is too rigorous for our vague sentiment. We prefer to say that we curtail the signs of mourning out of respect for the feelings of the dead, who, because they loved life, would have hated to depress it.

The speciousness of such an argument is obvious, for a lover never yet was found whose love could be abated by thought of the beloved. It is not the dead who decree the measure of our love. "No mourning by request" is a bequest beyond the power of probate, because the love that expresses itself in mourning can no more be abated than it can be created by request. But if we believe that the dead are really extinct, then the sooner we turn from the thought of them the better, for life is short, and if the death of our most beloved is just an interruption in the business of life, clearly it is our duty to make it as short an interruption as possible.

This, in point of fact, is just what happens. I do not say that most people believe in individual extinction, though the belief is common, but what is painfully clear is that most people are at heart so bewildered by the thought of death that they turn from it as useless and distressing. Evasion thus becomes a habit of thought, so that when death touches them closely, their only hope is to run away, even though this running away means a denial of the heart. Practised evasion has totally disarmed them, so that at sight of Death they flee from him, taking refuge in the distractions of existence, persuading themselves that it is their sense of reality which tells them that life, and not death, is important. But they escape at the price of a terrible insincerity, the insincerity of denying the powerful heart out of respect for the impotent intellect. And the penalty for this insincerity is fundamental disintegration. It really means the harbouring of fear until fear turns death into a secret and perpetual menace, threatening to every living relationship. It means a gradual hardening of the heart, a steeling of the will, in order to achieve a loveless self-sufficiency, and finally a mistrust of anything but the most obvious sense-pleasures. The Queen in *Hamlet* is a perfect example of this decline.

Indifference may well denote spiritual atrophy even when

it is our own death that has to be faced I myself have seen the very apotheosis of this attitude Fifteen years ago I saw it embodied in the lives of English youths who, at that time, were daily facing death in fighting aeroplanes. And never have I seen death look so small it became quite literally a trifling matter, by habit of thought not to be thought of But admirable and heroic as it is to set one's life at less than a pin's fee in the cause of honour so "the readiness is all", what ghastly superficiality is it that would hold a trifling view of life for the sake of an easy exit by the way of death? For small as death looked in the eyes of those young men, life looked even smaller—a thing of such gross and empty pleasures as to be contemptible Written across their faces was the tragic finding of Macbeth "Life's but a walking shadow" Like him they had attained indifference, like him they had drunk the cup to the lees, like him their indifference was the indifference of desperation—of men to whom Fate was an implacable enemy, and Destiny the certainty of defeat.

The rationalist attitude shown by indifference to death is to be rejected not because it is unsound but because it is atavistic and implies the return to a form of blind animal consciousness man had already surpassed thousands of years ago It betrays its atavism in the fact that it always leads to cynicism, for man cannot return upon himself without self-scorn he cannot deny his own consciousness without that form of spiritual suffering which shows itself in contempt The determining factor of human consciousness in the past was that it took the love line, and by adventuring along the path of its extended sympathies entered upon a world unknown to animal consciousness It is therefore useless to point to animal consciousness as if it contained the basic truth of human consciousness, and whenever science goes out of its way to do this, it is, in the strict sense of the words, corrupting and beastly

Its realism is partial, insufficient and misleading. True realism must face the entire sentient man.

What then shall we do who reject the way of rationalism as having no answer to our question? Where shall we turn who have discovered that the world of science is a little bounded world wholly contained within the world of religion? Shall we fly to orthodoxy and deliberately pretend that the graven monuments of dogma are identical with the warm breathing forms of faith? Recognising the insufficiency of the intellect, shall we fly in the face of intelligence and accept a *credo quia impossibile*? What shall we do who, by reason of the fact that we have loved with all our life, are precluded from taking the path of slowly hardening indifference? Of the love that has called us beyond mortal life, shall we make a religious effigy which denies the identity of the object of our love?

Shakespeare has put into the mouth of a murderer the reply of rationalism to those who mourn

“For what we know must be and is as common
As any the most vulgar thing to sense,
Why should we in our peevish opposition
Take it to heart? Fie! ’tis a fault to heaven,
A fault against the dead, a fault to nature,
To reason most absurd”

And the only reasonable answer we can make to this is, that it is completely wide of the mark in offering doctrinally to show why what *is* ought not to be. The King’s homily is an echo of the Queen’s, “Why seems it so particular with thee?” to which Hamlet so adequately replies, “Seems, madam! nay, it is, I know not ‘seems’” What shall we do, to whom the imperative present “is” of loss is not convertible into the past of “was”, which is the change heart-hardening indifference would make? Are we really content to allow the identity of a beloved individual to

pass from the particular consciousness of a beauty all its own, into the general consciousness of oneness with nature or meigence in the primal unity from which it sprang?

Belief in immortality has been called the pathetic fallacy, and thus likened to that so-called figure of speech by which the poets of all ages have given to natural objects the attributes of their own imaginations. Now if indeed this process be what it seems to the prosaic mind—nothing but a turn of metaphor artfully wrought to enliven the sympathy and produce in the reader willing suspension of disbelief—then poetry is what the purely rational mind believes it to be a form of deceit engendered by the adornment of untruth which is decked with imagery so pleasing to the senses that they are indulged at the expense of the truth-loving mind. But such an idea is destructive of the very unity upon which the conception of truth depends. it can only be held by those who have mean and partial conceptions of truth and have made a virtue of their own shortcoming.

Let us take an example. When day dawns, the simplest expression of that fact is contained in the words "day dawns." Science can add to this simple statement a description of the event. it describes the revolution of the earth in relation to the sun and is thus an enlargement of the original statement, being an account of the process by which the event occurs. it determines the facts and thus increases knowledge of the event. But the truth is still unborn in the individual consciousness, because the emotions, which are as essential to man as the mind, are untouched by either statement. the reality is not presented either by the plain statement of fact, or by a description of the process. But when Shakespeare says

"But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill"

he states the truth in its living reality. And how has he

done this? He has created an image whereby the event is immediately present to the mind's eye and the responsive senses, and he has done this by departing completely from the terms of fact to the terms of imagination. The important point to note is that although he has made a complete severance from fact, he has told the truth *in a measure* unattainable to the most accurate statement that could be made of all the relevant facts. His truth is therefore greater than the truth of fact, not subject to fact but, on the contrary, comprehensive of fact and additional to it. By mirroring the truth in his own imagination he has surpassed the facts and presented the reality.

Now nothing but a misuse of the rational mind can describe such a gift of consciousness as pathetic fallacy, it is pathetic fallacy only to those who mistrust their imagination. But the poetic statement can only be appraised by those who have, in some degree, the faculty that was employed in its making, and here the rationalist defaults. The poetic statement appeals to a higher level of consciousness than the rationalist concedes, but the incontrovertible fact about that consciousness is that it is the distinctively human consciousness. Not by the willing suspension of anything can we appreciate the poetic statement, but only by the activity of the imagination, which is the creative power of faith. The poetic statement represents the progression of the mind from the rational level to the higher imaginative level, and not (as the rationalist would have us believe) a regression from the real to the fanciful. It supplies to consciousness those elements of the whole truth which were lacking in the statement of rational truth. It shows a synthesis of the powers of human understanding which any lesser statement cannot achieve.

What is our conclusion from this? We conclude that truth itself is pathetic fallacy to those who have not the

energy of faith, or the power of imagination. We see that what has been described as pathetic fallacy so far from being fallacious, is beyond the whole realm of fact, and—what is more important—we see that reality belongs to the same region, that *reality has being in complete independence of fact*. Reality is what we are in search of, so we shall have need to remember that it is only to be comprehended by the statement of poetic truth, also, that the apprehension of reality does not imply disharmony between truth and fact but only intensification of the power by which they are perceived.

This intensification is indeed the creative process by which man not only becomes aware of truth that cannot be comprised by fact, but by which he bodies forth express likenesses of the truth in images that are irresistible to consciousness. For truth meets with acceptance, not by ratiocination, but by that response of the whole organism which is pure recognition. It is this recognition that is commonly called vision.

William Blake, the English mystic, said: "Every thing possible to be believ'd is an image of truth." What did he mean by that profound statement? Certainly not that every idle fancy of a lunatic is true. If we would understand him I think we must find out what he means by belief, for clearly he does not regard everything as possible of belief. Fancy, in this sense, cannot be believed. Unlike imagination, it does require the willing suspension of disbelief. Fancy is essentially lacking in that intensification which is the concomitant of imagination. It is the sport of the mind, and neither springs from the sense of objective truth, nor moves toward it, it is incapable of the strong persuasion of belief. Imagination, on the other hand, is the drawing together of every conscious and unconscious faculty in the formation of a concept which, when formed, will be an express image of that portion of

reality which was propagative in the mind, for the creative process of the imagination calls upon all the faculties to act at the fullest extent of their capacity, and this united action can only be brought about by the entire self-committal which is belief. When all the faculties are thus both aware and active, the impress upon them and the expression they take will be of truth. *If* we can believe anything, then what we believe will be an image of truth.

Belief in immortality is either a projection of man's creative imagination, or the play of his idle fancy. The measure of truth we can apprehend is according to the degree of belief—a conclusion which calls to mind the words, "According to your faith be it unto you."

III SPIRITUAL REALITY

UNLESS we are prepared to adopt a position of pure fatalism and to regard death as "the blind Fury with the abhorred shears" it is imperative that we should come to a clear understanding with ourselves about what we mean by Truth and Reality.

Perhaps the most challenging statement made in the preceding pages was that "reality has being in complete independence of fact." The endeavour was made to substantiate this belief by citing Shakespeare's imaginative realisation of the dawn, and by pointing out that although the words

"But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill"

are a figure of speech and constitute *in fact* a lie, they express the truth because they awaken in the mind the full sense of the reality. We do not need a scientist to tell us that, when the dawn breaks, no sort of gentleman arrayed in reddish-brown homespun is seen starting upon an impossible walking tour. Every sane person knows that as evidence

of the facts Shakespeare's statement is entirely untrue. that this is precisely what does *not* happen. The point is that the words *in themselves* are untrue. It is only when they call forth the active co-operation of the heart and mind of the reader that they become true. It is only as the imaginative consciousness of the reader seizes upon the images which the words evoke and allows them to become reflective of his own experience that they become a perfect unified image of the reality of dawn.

Truth is not what it is vulgarly supposed to be—an accurate record of the facts. It is something vastly more. It is something that involves relationship and is incomplete without co-operation. It is something that is meaningless to us unless we actively contribute to it. It is a conditional state of being, not an absolute condition of stasis.

Now the implications of this conclusion are tremendous. For at one sweep we have demolished what is called objective truth. We have said in effect to the Roman Catholic and other Churches. There is no absolute which exists apart from the mind of the subject that conceives it. If you attempt to confine truth to the realm of fact you must substitute for truth some fixation of your own mind due to a misconception of the nature of truth. Christ on the altar, or God in heaven, is a fixation of the mind, a mind that has forsaken imaginative truth for the false security of fact, and ultimately this conception must express, not the truth of reality, but the falsity of materialism. The mind that is looking for security in the direction of fact is proceeding in the opposite direction to the only way that leads to truth.

Truth is living reality. it is a condition of being, and because it is this, it cannot be contained in the record of anything that has been or may yet be. Truth is not dependent upon any fact in the universe. if all the facts of the universe were other than we know them to be, truth

would be unaffected Truth is the expression of the living relationship between subject and object There is simply and absolutely nothing that can be taken and placed in isolation—not God himself—and then described as the truth

Truth is relative, if by that we mean that it depends upon relationship, but truth is not comparative, it is not a matter of vague approximation It is the result of fusion, and fusion either occurs or it does not The truth of Shakespeare's imaginative realisation of the dawn is absolute truth because it upcalls in the mind a perfect and complete image of the dawn as it is seen by individual perception The experience of truth is always absolute and without the shadow of equivocation So that those, like Pilate, who are scornful and impatient with truth because it cannot be presented to them like a philosophers' stone, are just as blindly in error as those who will have it that truth is a stone, a church, a book, or an historic fact Truth is relative, but absolute in the mind that conceives it, it is not less itself because it is dependent upon you and me in our subjective relations to it

Now the truth that is expressed in complete defiance of the facts must obviously be wholly different in kind from the "truth" that is entirely dependent upon facts to support it The reality that has being in complete independence of fact must be very different from the "reality" of the modern psychologist which is entirely dependent upon the conception of the psyche as a static mirror of environment And the difference between them may be discerned if we note that whereas the first conception places all its weight upon the function and power of the imaginative consciousness, the second regards this creative element as belonging to the order of phantasy And there can be no reconciliation between them Reality that is only to be comprehended by the statement of poetic truth must remain inconceivable

to the mind that sees in the images of poetic truth only the disordered sport of fancy. It is upon the truth of imagination or the truth of fact that we must all ultimately take our stand.

And what is this truth of imagination? It is nothing more than the perfect co-ordination of experience. *Consciousness is continually receiving images upon the retina of the mind.* These images are of something which the imaginative consciousness accepts as reality, but which the unimaginative consciousness rejects because it cannot co-ordinate them by means of its rude criterion of fact. These images only become real in the mind that receives them by means of the imagination which grasps and co-ordinates them with previously received images. Thus the imaginative mind lives by a series of recognitions of ever-widening capacity, while the unimaginative mind walks the road of ever-narrowing ratiocinations. The one lives from his own stalk and finds nourishment upon every wind that blows, the other lives by a process of analytic verification that becomes in effect a process of progressive disintegration.

The imaginative consciousness that understands how reality has being in complete independence of fact will understand how reality has being independently of all phenomena, and only as it understands this can it have a true conception of spiritual life. It will know that the images of which it is receptive are not self-generated, because they are propagative in the complete body of experience and are therefore capable of belief. And if it is argued that this is to place truth in the position of subjective dependence, the imaginative consciousness can only reassert its confidence and show the validity of its faith by its works, for there is no proof that what the imaginative consciousness believes to be true is true. You can prove the truth of death, but you cannot prove the truth of life. You can prove the truth of the fifth proposition

of Euclid, but you cannot prove the truth of Beethoven's Quartet in C Sharp Minor: the one is demonstrable, the other is only persuasive, and, if you are not persuaded, is meaningless. I cannot demonstrate the truth of

"But look, the morn, in russet mantle clad,
Walks o'er the dew of yon high eastward hill"

Shakespeare himself can only appeal to the imaginative consciousness for recognition of this truth, and that he has done this implies a courageous and dramatic act of faith on his part. A corresponding act of faith is essential to the realisation of the truth, and this is only possible through the appeal to individual experience. The truth cannot be known in any other way. Dogma is as powerless to teach the truth as a stone thrown at the head is to instruct the mind.

What we know of this life must instruct us concerning the possibility of any other. And the greatest truth that we can learn from our experience of this life is that since nothing has true existence for us outside the imaginative consciousness, everything which has this existence there possesses the nature of being and is not subject to the laws of existence. All things are transmuted by the imagination and seen in their eternal truth. They are translated from the conditions of time and space to the conditions of eternal being, and it is only thus that we discover the nature of permanence and know that the smile of love and the tear of woe belong to eternal verity.

The wonder of art lies in its power to make this miracle apparent. And how does the artist achieve this wonder? By the gift of himself. The primary hunger of love stirs the imaginative consciousness to recognition of the essential nature of an object and impels him to seek creative means of translating his recognition of truth into a semblance by means of the images begotten in his consciousness. His

very power to accomplish this will be in exact proportion to the clarity of his vision. It is by his passionate belief in a reality hitherto unperceived that he is enabled to create the image of that reality.

“Verse, Fame, and Beauty are intense indeed,
But Death intenser—Death is Life’s high meed”

What does death mean to me?

Death means a change in the mode of living. It means freedom from the limitation of sense perceptions in the exercise of pure imaginative consciousness. It means a continuous life of vision, or none at all. It means release from becoming in the realisation of being. It means the final and complete death of that self which, as it now lives, stands between me and participation in eternal life here and now. It means the intensification of all the life I have ever known, until all is pure consciousness. It means the power to relive yesterday and the power to antedate to-morrow in timeless being. It means a destiny of free will. Above all, it means the simple continuity of whole or imaginative life, and the complete annihilation of partial or personal life.

In vision, how easily to be perceived! In fact, how fearfully obscured! For when death comes to steal heart’s treasure, he comes as a thief in the night. Death closes the “five windows that light the cavern’d man.” Death puts the shutters up, for the light that was, no longer illumines the house. Death hollows out silence, and the ear that listens for a voice hears the *sssh* of death like a retreating wave. Death empties the world of meaning and makes a mockery of all its affairs. Death takes the heart that has hung in anguish and treads it under his ice-cold feet. He is without pity: he jeers at mercy; he wrings most savagely the heart most full of love. Death blinds with his pain and maddens with his cruelty. He draws his scythe about

the body of youth, but will pass age by, leaving weariness to groan. Death casts a pall over the sunrise, and makes the sunset ache. Death splits the earth beneath the running brook of happy love and swallows all its joy in an abyss of tears. Death shakes the petals of life and holds up the barren stalk. He makes us to see so clearly that we recognise in every blade of grass the spear of pain. Eyes that have looked long at death grow fixed and stony. Death never answers.

Blessed be death, for there is that over which he is all powerful, and that over which he has no power. Blessed be death, for when his wind has passed right over us, then the self that stands between us and reality is swept away. While we could anchor our souls in any material thing, we were not free. There was anxiety for our possession, and belief that, with care, we could cherish it for delight. There was a strong secret chamber in the centre of our hearts which we held against the whole world. There was a fortress of self-defence that contained a shrine to be held if need be against the love of God himself. Surely, we believed, in this which speaks whole-hearted self-devotion, I am absolved. Surely in this, to which I give a love that would lay down its life, I am free to find self-release. Surely in the very sanctuary of love I can find a refuge for myself. The rest can go. All I have, I give freely and out of the fullness of my heart. Here alone I claim the privilege of love. Here alone I hide in a strong tower against the storm of fate.

But the whirlwind came and carried away our strong tower. It razed it to the ground and left us desolate. And because it was a secret tower, our nearest friends passed by unaware of what had gone. The one who contained the whole meaning and expression of life, died. And we died too—died in an agony of despair—died fighting all the way, from support to support, pleading with fate for pity.

WHAT DOES DEATH MEAN TO YOU?

and with life for a single ~~concession~~ Till there was nothing to defend not a recess ~~that pain~~ had not ravaged, not a cranny of possession that ~~death~~ had not ransacked

And still there is nothing

And yet there is everything For out of the whirlwind there came a still small voice, and it said "For the possession of one thing you would gladly have lost the world You have lost the treasure of your heart Behold, I give you another world, and in it your treasure You held it in fear, and your love was bound See, I have taken away the fear and freed the love" And then we saw what death had power over, and what he could not touch

All that is of self death takes away All that would bind another to its delight, even by the finest cords of love, death snaps Death rolls up the whole world of our existence and bowls it into vacancy And we are left stark

But gradually, and right out of the heart of pain, another world opens, a very still, very silent world, without time and space, but a world of such intense reality that it makes the old world look like a bubble floating in the sunshine, mirroring everything in beauty, but having the impermanence of a bubble and being as fragile to the touch On that day we know that the new world contains the old, and is to the old as the earth to the bubble We discover that it is a world of being where all things exist eternally without shadow of doubt, or need of substance It is a world where merely to think is to be full of action, where merely to desire is to fulfil the heart, where to remember is to return, and to anticipate is to realise

And then we see that this world of being sustains and upholds the world of existence, as the air upholds the bubble it enfolds the world of time as the air enfolds the earth We cannot drop out of it any more than we can fall out of the air From its living reality, the world that we know

takes all its images. Nothing we can do can change or alter this world of being. It is. It has being in one eternal moment which is the moment of its perpetual realisation.

It is to this world we shall all go after the life of the body. "Go?" No, not go, we shall awake when we rouse from the sleep of the senses we are in that world already, for it is the world of the reality of all that we now see expressed in the terms of sense. It is the world of spiritual reality.

It can be denied. Yet even those to whom it remains a fond chimera need not be wholly without consolation, for, gazing upon the form of love in death, there is abiding heart's ease in the thought: "As he is, so shall I be."

“RIPENESS IS ALL”

“O Love! they wrong thee much
That say thy sweet is bitter,
When thy ripe fruit is such
As nothing can be sweeter ”

Anonymous Poem of Seventeenth Century

R IPE is the word, not *rich*, textually and in point of veracity. Love's *rich* fruit is often bitter, for the sense may flower and come to fruit without ripeness, without that endurance of "the beams of love" * which alone can bring sweetness. The senses are alternately avid for love and dully indifferent: they belong to the flux of existence and have no stability in themselves, but the "sweet" of love is a spiritual essence, which the senses can mediate but which exists independently of them. Indeed, it is to convey this sweetness that the senses exist—like photographic plates that have no meaning apart from the sun.

Learning to bear the beams of love means hanging in the sun until the mellowing rays permeate to the core of the fruit and loosen it from its kernel, for while the kernel adheres the fruit is drawing nourishment from its own centre and is still unripe and bitter to taste. The ripe fruit is wholly permeated by the sun.

By so being, it achieves a suspended moment when it ceases to belong to itself and belongs to the sun, and this moment comes when it has learnt to bear the beams so well, it becomes their incarnation. Yet at this moment there must be a sort of death, as is shown by the fact that the ripe fruit will, if ungathered, begin to rot from this moment.

* *Vide* William Blake's poem, *The Little Black Boy*

"And we are put on earth a little space
That we may learn to bear the beams of love . . ."

An immense change takes place at the moment of ripeness—the tide of life turns upon itself

So we, when we know the ripeness of love, cease to live from the personal centres of hunger, desire, comfort and self-gratification. The moment comes when we give up ourselves, when we cease from making a demand upon life and pass from instinctive growth to enjoyment of being. And, come when it will, this is the moment of death and rebirth. This is the moment when the ripeness of love is truly sweet. For we surrender ourselves to the sun of love, we offer ourselves to the beams for their permeation. We love no more from desire, but because we perceive the lovely. And so we ask for nothing, wanting nothing, being more than content with what we perceive.

It is the moment of imagination, the moment of resurrected life after an often slow and painful death, the moment when the senses are precipitated and the spiritual eye opens.

And what is imagination? Imagination is nothing more nor less than seeing with the eye of God. It is first a ceasing from self—not by asceticism or self-mortification (these are false lights that lure to perversions) but by appreciation of a more desirable than self—by a sense of the lovely that exists in its own right and in complete independence of us—by a sense of the delight we experience in the pure worship of an object so existing—by such a recognition as makes personal desire of no importance.

Imagination is an act of recognition corresponding with the mythical moment of creation when God looked upon his work and saw that it was good. Inversely again, it is the creative moment, for when we truly perceive that which we love, all nature subserves our insight, the senses become the servants of a leader whose bidding they delight to follow. In the moment of imagination we perceive a correspondence which transcends nature—we become one with what we perceive—we are aware of the springs of its

life and are conscious that that life has in some beautiful sense a perfect similarity to, and at the same time a perfect dissimilarity from, our own. Naturally and biologically its life of course exists in what seems to be entire separation from us, but by imagination we leap the gulf of natural separation and make the tremendous act of spiritual identification. In the moment of imagination we see living unity expressing itself in endless diversity. And when we truly perceive anything, then a metamorphosis takes place in us whereby we automatically contribute to the life of the thing perceived. For in truth nothing exists which has a purely phenomenal and entirely separate existence, and the act of recognition, whereby we give living validity to what we perceive, is a definite creative contribution to its life.

Some would have it that this is a purely metaphysical theory, but anyone who has had what is a truly mystical experience knows the truth. In the act of imagination we subscribe to the life of what we perceive, not voluntarily but involuntarily, just as the sun subscribes to the life of the earth. Then the consciousness of recognition, which imagination yields, is so pleasing to us that the senses clamour for service, desiring above all things to make an image of that perfection which the eye of vision beheld.

This is the pattern of creation. To be creative is to fulfil the life of man. It is his delight and the true end of life. Whether it be the propagation of children, or the making of a work of art, or the cleansing of a sewer, the pattern is the same: love continuing to the point of complete self-sacrifice, the death of the selfhood, the birth of imagination, the creative effort to incarnate spiritual life. The very vegetables live according to such a pattern.



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